



**UNIVERSITY OF<sup>TM</sup>  
KWAZULU-NATAL**

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**INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**Being a born-again man: Engaging the masculinity construction and negotiation of  
Pentecostal men in KwaZulu-Natal, Midland's region**

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree.**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**(Gender and Religion)**

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**South Africa**

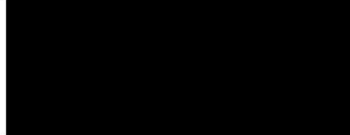
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**May 2025**

## Declaration

I, **Siwakhile Ngcobo**, declare that the research in this thesis, except where indicated and referenced, is my original work. The thesis has not been submitted for any degree examination at any other institution. The contents of this thesis do not contain or include any personal data, photographs or graphs.

Signed:



Supervisor: Prof. Charlene Van Der Walt

Signed:



Date: 19 May 2025

## **Dedication**

To my wife and son: thank you for your patience, understanding, and the grace you extended to me during this process. I am grateful for you both.

To my study group: you rockstars!!!! Thank you for creating the space to vent and write and your unwavering support when it got tough. I appreciate you.

I am deeply grateful to the men who participated in this study, willingly sharing their embodied experiences of masculinity within the Pentecostal context. I am grateful for the time you took out of your busy schedules and sincerely hope that I have done justice to you sharing your experiences and journeys with me. This project would not have been complete without each and every one of you.

## Acknowledgements

Undertaking this project has been one of my greatest yet fulfilling challenges. It has challenged and stretched me to question a variety of religio-cultural notions of what it means being a man – a black African man in a post-colonial context and navigating everyday life challenges. It has been an opportunity for me to venture into the unknown and unpack this religious identity that I hold dear to my heart and has defined most of my adult life. I have learned that masculinity is subjective and that our embodied experiences shape how we relate to the world and our faith.

To God be the glory! You did it again, *wenza indlela lapho ingekho khona, wangithwala kwaze kwaba la.*

To my supervisor, Prof. Charlene van der Walt, you truly are a gift. Thank you for being on this journey with me, shaping my thought process and for your continued support both academically and otherwise. I am grateful to have been part of the Gender and Religion programme under your mentorship. You have pushed me to the limits because you believed in me and what I had to offer. Thank you for shaping my scholarship, opening spaces that were beyond my wildest dreams.

To Prof. Dr Peter-Ben Smith, thank you for offering me the opportunity to drink from your wealth of knowledge. I am forever grateful for your constructive criticism, positive feedback and for being a springboard that shaped my theoretical standpoint.

To my wife, thank you for supporting me in this journey and allowing me to pursue my studies further. Thank you for understanding my ministry, my passion for academia and for always being there.

To my son, Sqalokuhle, I am deeply grateful to God for the blessing that you are. Though I have missed many bedtime tuck-ins, your smile and your tiny little hugs made my worst days brighter. One day when you read this project, I certainly hope it makes you proud.

To my friends and colleagues, thank you for your continued support and for being patient with me.

Finally, I would like to thank the National Research Foundation for providing funding to undertake this study. I am forever grateful.

## ABSTRACT

This study explores how born-again Pentecostal men in Kwa-Zulu Natal navigate, negotiate, and construct their masculinities within the intersecting contexts of media, religion, and culture. Informed by the theoretical underpinnings of African masculinity theory, redemptive masculinity theory and media theory, the research employs a qualitative participatory methodology as a systematic method of enquiry and direct collaboration with those affected by the phenomenon being studied for the purpose of change or action. Individual interviews, focus group discussions, and auto-photography were as data collection tools. The findings reveal that despite adopting a born-again identity framed by Pentecostal redemptive theology, men remain deeply influenced by dominant heteropatriarchal discourses that frame masculinity through roles such as provider, protector, and leader. The study highlights the persistent tension between religious expectations, cultural norms, and lived realities, particularly as men attempt to reconcile their faith-based transformation with enduring patriarchal privileges. Furthermore, the study highlights the complex process in which born again-men navigate the negotiation and construction of masculinity in their everyday life.

Through the engagement with data collected from the study and analysis, it is evident that critical men and masculinity scholarship within the South African context does not provide an alternative methodology to studying masculinity, thus offering one singular dimension based on a cis-heteropatriarchal framework. The study proposes queering masculinities as an alternative, which refers to queer as form a systematic resistance to the hegemony that is stuck and to counter the cis-heteronormative hegemonic masculinity while creating space for all men as it interrogate the normativity of gender and masculinity. Instead of constructing masculinities within a heteronormative framework that does not give men autonomy, agency and space to envision an alternative masculinity, we must then queer masculinities. Queering redemptive masculinities within the Pentecostal context creates space where men can explore alternative ways of being a man while also giving them language in which they express their lived masculine experiences.

**Keywords:** *Masculinity, born-again, Pentecostalism, post-colonial, patriarchy*

## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1	Introduction	8
1.2	Background and rationale	9
1.3	Research methodology	11
1.4	Research questions	11
1.5	Study aims and objectives.	12
1.6	Theoretical frameworks	12
1.7	Thesis structure	13
1.8	Conclusion	15
<b>2</b>	<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE OVERVIEW</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1	Introduction	16
2.2	Men, masculinity and religion	18
<b>2.2.1</b>	<b>Defining masculinity</b>	18
<b>2.2.2</b>	<b>Contextualising masculinity in South Africa</b>	22
<b>2.2.3</b>	<b>Masculinity construction and negotiation</b>	31
<b>2.2.4</b>	<b>Masculinity and economic power</b>	34
<b>2.2.5</b>	<b>Critical masculinity studies and religion in the African context</b>	38
2.3	African Pentecostalism	40
<b>2.3.1</b>	<b>Gender, sexuality and African Pentecostalism</b>	43
<b>2.3.2</b>	<b>Born-againism</b>	46
2.4	Pentecostal masculinity	47
<b>2.4.1</b>	<b>Pentecostal appropriation of mass media</b>	53
2.5	Media representation of masculinity	54
<b>2.5.1</b>	<b>Popular culture artefacts and masculinity</b>	55
<b>2.5.2</b>	<b>Popular culture and gendered images of masculinity</b>	56
<b>2.5.3</b>	<b>Masculinity representation in lifestyle magazines</b>	57
<b>2.5.4</b>	<b>Networked masculinities</b>	63
2.6	Conclusion	66
<b>3</b>	<b>CHAPTER THREE: THEORY AND METHOD</b>	<b>70</b>
3.1	Introduction	70

3.2	African Masculinity Theory	72
3.3	Redemptive masculinity	78
3.4	Media theory	82
3.5	Research methodology	87
<b>3.5.1</b>	<b>Participatory research methodology</b>	88
<b>3.5.2</b>	<b>Research design</b>	89
<b>3.5.3</b>	<b>Sampling technique</b>	89
<b>3.5.4</b>	<b>Data collection</b>	90
<b>3.5.5</b>	<b>Data analysis</b>	93
3.6	Validity and reliability	96
3.7	Positionality	97
3.8	Ethical considerations	98
3.9	Conclusion	98
<b>4</b>	<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS</b>	<b>101</b>
4.1	Introduction	101
4.2	Overview of individual interviews.	139
<b>4.2.1</b>	<b>Focus Group Interviews/Discussions Data</b>	141
4.3	Auto-photography reflections	155
4.4	Theme development	161
4.5	Conclusion	162
<b>5</b>	<b>CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION</b>	<b>163</b>
5.1	Introduction	163
5.2	Masculinity as performance	165
5.3	Religious identity	177
<b>5.3.1</b>	<b>New lifestyle/culture</b>	178
5.4	The collapse of culture and religion	182
5.5	Sexuality and embodiment	188
5.6	Vulnerability	197
5.7	Mediated masculinity	201

5.8	Saying a lot without saying anything	204
5.9	Conclusion	208
<b>6</b>	<b>CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION</b>	<b>211</b>
6.1	Introduction	211
6.2	Research process	211
6.3	Approach and process of the study	212
6.4	Positionality	215
6.5	Theoretical underpinnings	215
6.6	General conclusion	219
<b>6.6.1</b>	<b>Dominant discourses of masculinity</b>	219
<b>6.6.1.1</b>	<b>Ideo-theological identity</b>	222
<b>6.6.2</b>	<b>Sexuality, gender and embodiment</b>	223
<b>6.6.3</b>	<b>Media and masculinity</b>	226
<b>6.7.4</b>	<b>Everyday navigation and negotiation</b>	227
6.7	Recommendations for future studies	229
6.8	Conclusion	230
	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>ANNEXURES</b>	<b>268</b>
7.1	Appendix A – Research Information Sheet	268
7.2	Appendix B – Consent Form	270
7.3	Appendix C – Interview Schedule	271
7.4	Appendix D – Ethical Clearance	272
7.5.	Appendix E- Certification of Editing	273

# 1 CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

The process of masculinity construction involves a set of complex characteristics prescribed by institutions such as religion, culture, and media. The meaning of masculinity is also constructed within, influenced, and constrained by multiple historical social contexts (Malinga & Ratele, 2018:279). As an embodied experience, masculinity is performed through activity attached and expressed through the body (Ratele, Shefer, Strebel & Fouten, 2010). These activities are performed according to the socially constructed norms attached with masculinity. According to Borgogna and McDermott (2022:3), traditional masculine ideology proposes that men perform and maintain a specific gender identity that reflects the socially accepted norms of masculinity. Religion prescribes that a man must be a leader, head of the family and protector of this family (Owino, 2012). Through its descriptive model of godly/biblical manhood, religion also requires men to be responsible for the well-being of not only their immediate family but also the community they are a part of. Thus, setting an expectation that men must live up to. Culture also dictates how man should construct their masculinity according to the dominant cultural norms of what it means to be a man. Connell (2005) explains this process through the concept of hegemonic masculinity in which she describes the social expectation that men encounter to embody the perfect expressions of masculinity through exercising dominance, power, control, aggression, etc. These characteristics are used to measure one's successful embodiment of masculinity. Within these cultural expectations and prescriptive norms of masculinity, popular culture also provides its own visual representation of what this embodiment should look like. Media provides modes in which these ideals of masculinity are played out and explored through popular culture. Men's lifestyle magazines, social networking sites and adverts provide representation of masculinity using both religious and cultural norms of masculinity. A model that men should aspire to.

Research has shown that visual representations of masculinity influence the masculinity construction process depictions of different masculinities (Vokey, Tefft & Tysiaczny, 2013). This study explores this intersection of media, culture and religion in the process of masculinity construction and looks at how born-again Pentecostal men navigate and construct their masculinity. Through exploration of Pentecostalism and its fundamental beliefs and the religious identity of being born again, this project investigated how these factors influence men

in their masculinity construction process. Being a born-again black African man, I am constantly negotiating my masculinity in every space I enter, my church, community, and my representation online.

This chapter provides a general introduction of the study by beginning with the background and rationale of the study. It proceeds to outline the research questions and the study objective. It then proceeds to provide the theoretical framework of this study, outlining the methodology process used for the study. Lastly, it outlines the structure the study is presented in.

## **1.2 Background and rationale**

This study is informed by my overview of masculinity construction and how it is produced in the Pentecostal movement when conceptualising, advertising, and promoting their men's conferences. Out of this engagement, I found that masculinity is reproduced to fit into the patriarchal ideologies of masculinity, such as male dominance, superiority and masculinity as violent performance, man as penetrator, provider, and protector. The pervasiveness of these ideologies impedes the envisioned transformation of masculinity that Ezra Chitando refers to as redeemed masculinity. This alternative envisions positive and life-affirming masculinity that is for gender justice and gender equality (Chitando, 2007, 2013); masculinity that embodies vulnerability.

The prevailing notions of masculinity in promotional material at men's conferences speak to the societal and religious beliefs about masculinity and how it is constructed and enacted in the Christian faith landscape. Kula (2008) argues that these images which are produced by Pentecostal churches in their promotional material rely on particular messages to its audience and consumers. They appeal to an audience that understands the logic behind the images (Kula, 2008:112).

African Pentecostal traditions and teachings rely on the concept of biblical masculinity/manhood (Owino, 2012; Van Klinken, 2013) and liberated, transformed, or redemptive masculinity (Chitando, 2013) in constructing Pentecostal masculinity. Pentecostalism refers to Pentecostal or Charismatic expressions of faith and ascribes their beliefs and life experience to the work of the Holy Spirit (Kaunda & John, 2020:2). There are images of ideal Pentecostal masculinity portrayed in men's conference promotional material, projecting a masculine ideal, and there are images in popular culture and media providing

another representation of masculinity that subscribes to hegemonic masculinity (Van der Watt, 2016). These representations provide a challenge for Pentecostal born-again men, as they must navigate between Pentecostal norms of masculinity and cultural expectations of masculinity (Lindhardt, 2015). One of the core fundamental doctrines of Pentecostalism is the notion of rebirth/being born again (Nel, 2014; Edet, 2019), which is a conversion process. Nel (2014) asserts that this conversion process comes through accepting Christ as Lord and Saviour over their lives, and changes in behavioural and moral lifestyle. This theology informs the basis on which Pentecostal masculinity is constructed: born-again men must give up their hegemonic norms of masculinity and reconstruct new identities under Pentecostalism (Gabaitse, 2020).

Being situated in this context myself, it is often difficult to assert my masculine identity because of the patriarchal expectations that I must live up to as a man who is a pastor and leader in my community. The expectations are that I marry, be a responsible husband, and be of noble character both privately and publicly. As a Pentecostal born-again man, I must embody Christ-centred masculinity and people must see a godly man in me. Yet as a contemporary man situated in this space, I am often conflicted in the embodiment of my masculinity. On one hand, I must live up to the traditional notions of masculinity and on the other, I must embody my born-again masculinity; I cannot afford to neglect either. There is a constant need for me to negotiate my masculine identity wherever I go, and it is emotionally taxing. I am concerned about this, because I am a Pentecostal man navigating my masculinity and I am finding it hard to maintain this theological ideology of masculinity and what society expects of me. However, these expectations of manhood are unattainable as the landscape keeps on changing and not static.

Being born-again presents different contextual and personal challenges for men. Not only does it require radical changes in lifestyle and the expectation of embodying transformed, liberated, and redeemed masculinity (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012; Chitando, 2013), but there is also conflict between Pentecostal norms and cultural expectations of manhood (Lindhardt, 2015). It is against this conflict and the prevailing notions of masculinity in Pentecostal men's conference promotional material that this study investigates and explores how a born-again Pentecostal man constructs and navigates his masculine identity at the backdrop of mass media representations of masculinity and traditional notions of masculinity. I want to explore the dominant discourses of masculinity construction among African born-again men and how they navigate media representations, religious and tradition expectations in their process of masculinity construction.

### 1.3 Research methodology

This study is situated in qualitative research tradition, using participatory research methodology. Participatory research methodology is a knowledge production method that is collaborative work between the researcher and the participants. Vaughn and Jacquez (2020:1) defined it as a systematic method of enquiry and direct collaboration with those affected by the phenomenon being studied for the purpose of change or action. This methodology provides opportunities to address gaps in our knowledge while simultaneously contributing to social change (Boonzaier & Kessi, 2018). Furthermore, the methods describe subjective experiences of participants from their own perspective as means of better understanding the issues they face. It also gives the participants and the research the opportunity to co-create knowledge during the research process.

To engage this context of the study, a phenomenological approach will be used as it allows the researcher to investigate the lived experiences of a born-again man and how he constructs his masculinity. According to Creswell (2013), phenomenology describes common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences. It focuses on describing what participants have in common as they experience that phenomenon. Groenewald (2004) illustrates that phenomenology is concerned with the unpacking and interpretation of the inner essence of the participants' cognitive process regarding the same experience. The phenomenon being studied in this process is the masculinity construction of born-again men. Social research has shown that masculinity is constructed differently across different contexts. The second section of chapter three further outlines the data collection tools that were used in the study and the data analysis process.

### 1.4 Research questions

The main research question for the study is: ***How do born-again men navigate media, religion and culture in the process of masculinity constructions in the Pentecostal faith traditions?***

To answer this question, I will use the following sub-research questions:

- What are the ideo-theological notions and dominant construction of born-again masculinity within the Pentecostal faith traditions?
- How does media influence their masculinity construction process?
- How do religion and culture influence their masculinity construction process?

- How do contemporary born-again men navigate their negotiation and construction of masculinity in their everyday life?

### **1.5 Study aims and objectives.**

The aims and objectives of this study are:

- To explore the ideo-theological contours and dominant constructions of born-again masculinity within the Pentecostal faith tradition.
- To understand how media influences the masculinity construction process.
- To understand how religion and culture influence the masculinity construction process.
- To explore how contemporary born-again men navigate their negotiation and construction of masculinity in their everyday life.

### **1.6 Theoretical frameworks**

A theoretical framework provides a conceptual starting point through which the researcher chooses to frame the study. The study will use three conceptual theories to engage with the intersection of media, religion, and culture in the process of the masculinity construction process of born-again Pentecostal men. Within a larger frame of Masculinity Theory, this study will explore African Masculinity Theory (AMT) to engage the social-historical, socio-economic, and social structures that have shaped and influenced African black men's experiences and construction of masculinity. According to Morrell and Swart (2005), men in the global south or in a postcolonial context cannot be theorised outside of their contexts. They argue that it requires a flexible approach to understanding and appreciating men as gendered beings while also acknowledging the indigenous knowledge systems that inform the masculinity construction process. Therefore, AMT was used to draw on the experiences of African men in a post-colonial or global south context in exploring their lived realities and their process of masculinity construction, taking into consideration their historical and socio-economic status (Ratele, 2014). AMT considers the complex life experiences of African men, ranging from issues of fatherhood, post-colonial masculine identities, media and religion and the immediate environment that shapes masculinities (Ratele, Shafer & Botha, 2011; Ratele, 2016; Mfecane, 2018). As a framework, it will explore the complexities of masculinity

construction and negotiations among African men within the Pentecostal faith traditions and offer a nuanced understanding of where born-again men situate themselves within the landscape of African masculinity. To engage with the religious aspect of masculinity of born-again man, redemptive masculinity concept will also be used to situate this study within the African religious/theological landscape.

Redemption and transformation through doctrine of being born again is part of a larger Pentecostal project (Van Klinken, 2016; Gabaitse, 2020). According to Chitando and Kilonzo (2018) Pentecostalism seeks to transform masculinities in Africa as an attempt to remedy the troubled notions of hegemonic masculinity within civil society and faith communities. The concept of redemptive masculinity embraces, characterises, and identifies masculinities that are life giving and positive (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012:1). African Redemptive Masculinity Theory as religio-cultural resource was used to explore the extent to which religion influences the construction of Pentecostal masculinity and non-hegemonic masculinity. For a more nuanced engagement of masculinity and how it is represented in media, mediatisation theory offers us an in-depth understanding of contemporary media and how it constructs and influences our realities (Wood, 2008).

Research has shown that masculinity representation in popular culture/mass media influences how men construct their masculinities (Vokey, Bruce & Tysiaczny, 2013). To explore the visual representation of masculinity, how men relate to these representations and how they influence their process of masculinity construction, media theory will be used to engage the meaning behind the portrayed images. It considers the three metaphors/roles of media as highlighted by Meyrowitz (1993). Firstly, media as a conduit, which draws attention to media transport for symbols and messages across the distance from senders to the audience. Secondly, media as a language focuses on the different ways in which media packages the messages and frames the relationship between the sender of the content and the receiver. Lastly, media as environment, which looks at how media systems and institutions facilitate and structure interaction and communication.

## **1.7 Thesis structure**

Chapter one introduces this study by providing a broader overview. To introduce this study, I discuss the purpose by outlining the background and rationale of the study. It briefly provides an outlook of the research process as well as detaining the critical questions and objectives of the study.

Chapter two locates this study within the field of men, masculinity, and religion within the South African context. I present a review of three literature themes to establish the interest in media, religion and culture and their intersection in the process of masculinity construction. It highlights the study of masculinities and the construction of masculinities in a postcolonial context and the factors that inform men's construction of their masculinities. To address the religious aspect of masculinity, it highlights the current literature of masculinity and religion, and the relationship thereof. Secondly, it discusses Pentecostalism as a branch of Christianity and its expansion in the African context. It outlines key doctrinal issues such as the role of the Holy Spirit and rebirth/born-againism identity. It further engages with critical literature, largely located within feminist studies that argue Pentecostal masculinities are constructed within a larger patriarchal frame of masculinity, therefore questioning the redemptive aspects of Pentecostalism when it comes to transformation. Lastly, it reviews literature on visual representation of masculinity through popular culture modes such as men's lifestyle magazines and social networking sites. It engages with this representation and argues that not only does it influence how men construct their masculinity and how they view themselves, but also how this representation excludes certain masculine bodies. It further highlights how masculinity is negotiated and affirmed online on social networking sites, showing the contestation and representation of masculinity through hegemonic norms.

Chapter three discusses the conceptual theories and the approach used for this study. My objective in this chapter is to engage masculinity as an embodied experience within African and redemptive masculinity theories which have been used to theorise masculinities within gender and religious studies. To further explore the complexities of this embodied experience, I engage media theory, which provides understanding into how visual representation of masculinity in popular culture, informed by both cultural and religion norms, influences the negotiation of this embodied experience. My focus is to show an interdisciplinary approach in theorising masculinity. The chapter outlines the research approach used for this study: participatory research methodology. I provide a detailed account of the data collection methods which include individual and group interviews and the auto-photography tool, which has been used in studying masculinities through the participatory research method. I also give a detailed account of how the data was analysed using thematic content analysis and how the themes were generated.

Chapter four provides a detailed presentation and analysis of the data collected using the three data collection methods. It will also offer an analysis of data to answer the research questions.

Using thematic content analysis, themes were generated to organise the data which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter five provides a discussion of the research result, drawing on the themes discussed in chapter four.

Chapter six presents a conclusion of the current study. I argue for the importance of this study in a broader field of men, masculinities and religion while seeking to explore further research.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

This introductory chapter provides a general introduction of this study by explaining its purpose, which is to explore the dominant discourses of masculinity construction among African born-again men and how they navigate media representations and religious and traditional expectations in their process of masculinity construction. I outlined the background and rationale for this study, which is informed by my engagement with Pentecostal men's conference promotional material, which reproduces the dominant construction of masculinity within the theological or faith landscape. I also provided the critical questions, aim and objective of this study. The chapter also outlines the conceptual frameworks and the research methodology that was used to plan, execute, and conduct this study using participatory research methodology. The literature review chapter critically engages with and discusses the role of the three thematic areas – media, religion, and culture – in the process of masculinity construction in the South African context.

## 2 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE OVERVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

In scaffolding the literature themes that this study critically engages with, based on the research questions it aims to answer, I will first lay out the fundamental work that informs this study. Masculinity scholarship has been well researched and documented over the last three decades. My approach to studying and researching men and masculinities has been informed by my interest in the intersection of media, religion, and culture in the process of masculinity construction, and how these factors provide a nuanced understanding of masculinities and men lived experiences in constructing and negotiating their masculinity. I began by exploring the construction of black masculinity and its representation in popular culture using the film *Moonlight* as reflecting surface.<sup>1</sup> Copeland (2018) asserts that the film offers an analysis of the difficulties young men encounter, and experiences associated with the intersection of culture, sexuality and gender when constructing and negotiating their masculine identities. It focused on the influence of popular culture on the process of masculinity construction and the role of the body in embodying the ideals of masculinity. The film was used to grapple with issues of masculinity theologically and the role of the body in negotiating masculinity within the faith context. Using body theology and social construction of gender, it concluded by arguing that the body is central in the construction and performance of masculinity, yet it is a neglected tool in the embodiment of masculinity.

Following this engagement, I examined the production of masculinity in Pentecostal men's conference promotional media in the South African Pentecostal context at the backdrop of gender-based violence. The critical engagement with promotional media (conference posters, promotional videos and websites) showed the perverseness of dominant masculine discourses such as male dominance, power, violence, leadership, and headship. These discourses continue to negatively impact on women's experiences of violence and sexual abuse (Phiri, 2001; Mathews, Jewkes & Abrahams, 2011). Furthermore, through its presentation of the masculine

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<sup>1</sup> <https://a24films.com/films/moonlight>

“A timeless story of human connection and self-discovery, *Moonlight* chronicles the life of a young black man from childhood to adulthood as he struggles to find his place in the world while growing up in a rough neighbourhood of Miami. At once a vital portrait of contemporary African American life and an intensely personal and poetic meditation on identity, family, friendship, and love, *Moonlight* is a groundbreaking piece of cinema that reverberates with deep compassion and universal truths. Anchored by extraordinary performances from a tremendous ensemble cast, Barry Jenkins's staggering, singular vision is profoundly moving in its portrayal of the moments, people, and unknowable forces that shape our lives and make us who we are.”

body, the promotional material portrays masculinity as patriarchal and violent, which deeply informs and justifies violence against women.

The role of media and religion, influenced by culture, play an important role in the construction and negotiation of masculinity. Media provides representations of masculinity based on discursive social norms and provides a concrete idea of what masculinity or manhood should look like. Similarly, religion gains strength from this production of masculinity to further its agenda in maintaining patriarchal power of men through maintaining hegemonic ideals of masculinity by appropriating and using media as a platform in communicating this message. Having engaged with the intersection of media, religion, culture, and the representation and production of masculinity in both film and men's conference promotional material, this study wants to further explore how these intersections influence the process of masculinity construction of born-again men.

In exploring the ideo-theological contours, the dominant construction of masculinity within the Pentecostal faith traditions, and how culture and religion influence the process of masculinity construction, the study engages with literature on men and masculinities in a global context, then narrows it down to the South African context. I argue that masculinities in South Africa are informed by historical events and the lived experiences of African men which not only inform their construction of masculinity as men, but also as born-again Christian men. Before becoming born-again, men constructed and understood their masculine identities through socially constructed hegemonic norms of masculinity. After converting to Pentecostalism, they must publicly denounce their hegemonic norms (Lindhardt, 2015). In exploring how contemporary born-again men navigate their negotiation and construction of masculinity in their everyday lives, I discuss how Pentecostalism influences their process. I consider its theological teachings on transformation and conversion, and the difficulties born-again men encounter in a context where they are to embody and live up to the expectation of both hegemonic/traditional and Pentecostal masculinity as transformed men.

Lastly, I critically engage with mass media, arguing that its continued representation of masculinity in men's lifestyle magazines, programming, and social networking sites (SNS) not only promotes hypermasculinity, but also excludes certain bodies in its representation. The intersection of media, religion, and culture in the study of men and masculinities provides an understanding of how they construct and make sense of their masculinity in a society saturated with different representations of masculinities, with religious views of what real manhood or

biblical manhood looks like, and how culture through patriarchy creates these unrealistic expectations of masculinity. If we are to understand the ascent of masculinity as an embodied experience and a contested gendered identity, there is a need to engage these factors and the influence they yield in the process of masculinity.

## **2.2 Men, masculinity and religion**

The study of men and masculinities has been well developed globally and theorised largely using the concept of hegemonic masculinity by Raewyn Connell. The scholarship of men, masculinity and religion is an interdisciplinary field ranging from marketing (Schroeder, 2006); sociology (Messerschmidt, 2019), African psychology (Ratele, 2020), gender studies (Morrell, 1998, 2001), media studies (Viljoen, 2012) and religious/theological studies (Van Klinken, 2013; Owino, 2014; Chitando, 2018), to name a few. All these scholars have critically engaged with the concept of masculinity, its meaning, and how it is constructed, performed, and contested in a contemporary society. The process of masculinity construction includes a set of complex characteristics prescribed by institutions such as religion, culture, society, and media (Gabaitse, 2020). To critically engage with men, masculinities, religion, and the construction of masculinity, this section explores the dominant constructions of masculinity within the institutions that prescribe what it means to be a man, and the expectations placed on embodying masculinity.

This section attempts to define masculinity, using existing literature that has explored the meaning of masculinity within the general scholarship, its conceptualisation, and how it has developed as a field. Secondly, it discusses masculinity in a postcolonial context such as South Africa, looking at how colonialism has shaped masculinities and how men make sense of their masculine identities in the new era, and the contending hegemonic ideals of masculinity. Lastly, it discusses the role of religion in the process of masculinity construction from a theological perspective, and how scholars within this field have used theological concepts to understand masculinities and transform dangerous masculinities perpetuated by patriarchy and hegemonic norms of masculinity.

### **2.2.1 Defining masculinity**

Defining masculinity is a daunting task as it has been argued to have different meanings in different contexts. In attempting to define masculinity, Connell (1995) offers different strategies or approaches that can be used. Firstly, the essentialist approach defines the core of

masculinity, which does not exist except in contrast to femininity, and is characterised by risk-taking, irresponsibility, responsibility, and aggression (p.68). Secondly, the positivist approach defines masculinity by describing the patterns of men's lives in each context (p.69). Thirdly, the normative approach defines those standards of what masculinity ought to be and the social behaviour of men (p.70). Lastly, the semiotic approach defines masculinity through symbolic differences where masculinity and femininity are constructed (p.70). These approaches lay the foundation in which the concept of masculinity has been defined in the field.

Robert Morrell defines masculinity as a collective gender identity and not a natural attribute (Morrell, 1998:607). He asserts that masculinity is socially constructed and fluid. Elsewhere, he defines masculinity as a socially constructed male gender identity belonging to male persons; a fluid identity that changes over time (Morell, 2001). Mensah (2021) simplifies Robert Morrell's definition by referring to masculinity as attributes, behaviours, social roles, and qualities that are regarded as characteristics of a boy or a man. It is a fluid concept that represents what men do in their everyday experiences through different forms of participation and engagement within a social context (Mensah, 2021). These definitions of masculinity concede that masculinity is a gender identity and define it in binary terms of belonging to a male person.

In her theorisation of gender, Connell (2002) asserts that gender is a social condition that is actively constructed by members of society. Gender, through social construction, becomes a social structure which defines gender identity. The social structure offers patterns of fundamental differences between male and female bodies which are considered to be natural (Connell, 2002:9). According to Tolbert (2000), the essential approach considers gender as inherent to an individual and constructs gender on the presumption of biological sex, which gives existence to gender binaries. Gender binary is defined as gender concerning biological sex, limiting the acceptance of various gender expressions (Lenning, 2009). The functional differences between sexes, between male and female, enabled the construction of gendered identities: masculinity as male gender identity and femininity as female gender identity (Tolbert, 2000; Morrell, 2001; Connell, 2002). These identities are constructed through societal gender order which allocates power, possibilities, limits, and obligations based on gender identity. Gebregeorgis (2016) asserts that masculinity as gender identity is characterised by a display of power, aggression, and strength, while femininity is oppositional to masculinity. The gender hierarchy has somewhat informed the theorisation of masculinity being centred on issues of power and dominance.

Within any context, there exist multiple masculinities. These masculinities do not share the same hierarchical power nor privilege. To understand this hierarchy, Connell (1995, 2005) provides four categories (hegemony, subordinate, complicit and marginalised) in which these masculinities are ranked. Messerschmidt (2019) also uses these categories of masculinity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a slight modification to include protest masculinity. Connell (1995:77) defines *hegemonic masculinity* as a concept referring to the cultural dynamics by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life. It is defined as a configuration of gender practice, which embodies the culturally accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees male dominance and the subordination of women. *Subordinate masculinity* is masculinity that is at the bottom of the gender hierarchy. Historically these men were considered effeminate because they did not embody hegemonic masculinity and often were homosexual (Connell, 1995:78). Messerschmidt (2019) asserts that subordinate masculinities are constructed as lesser than or deviant to hegemonic masculinity. *Complicit masculinity* does not embody hegemonic masculinity, yet through unequal gender practice and relations, benefit from patriarchal dividends (Messerschmidt, 2019:86). *Marginalised masculinities* are masculinities that are discriminated against based on dominant and subordinate class and race (Connell, 1995:80). Lastly, Messerschmidt (2019) introduces *protest masculinity* as masculinity that is constructed as compensatory hyper-masculinity that is found in reaction to a social position that lacks economic and political power. This masculine category will be further explored later when engaging masculinity representation in the media. Luyt (2012) asserts that this hierarchy of masculinities plays a central role in maintaining the functioning of patriarchy which ensures powerful men remain in power. Out of all these categories, hegemonic masculinity as a concept has been used to theorise and understand men in different contexts and to explain men's need for power. These masculine categories are different from each other and do not enjoy the same power. In making sense of men and their relations in contemporary society, influenced by patriarchy and heteronormativity, masculinity theory asserts that those men who embody and embrace the masculine attributed and behaviours that are considered manly are celebrated. It also points to the fragility of masculinity and men's desire to have power and dominance, not only over women but also other men (Jewkes and Morrell, 2018). Arguably, these categories of masculinity within the South African context are determined by race, sexuality and gender and ordered by patriarchy.

Non-heterosexual men as per masculine hierarchy occupies subordinate masculinity, rendering them powerless as per patriarchal system that favours heterosexual men. It could be argued that

dues to this positionality and the social construction of gender, non-heterosexual men are socially and systematically discriminated against (Langa, 2020; Connell, 2005; Ratele, 2014).

Hegemonic masculinity has informed the global and general masculinity scholarship and has been used to contextualise masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Messerschmidt (2019:86) asserts that hegemonic masculinity is a specific form of masculinity in each historical and society-wide setting that legitimises unequal gender relations between men and women, between masculinity and femininity and between masculinities. As a concept used to legitimise unequal power and gender relations, hegemonic masculinity has been used to theorise masculinities. In the field of gender studies, femicide and violence against women, it has been used to understand the man's need for power, control, and dominance (Jewkes, Mathews & Abrahams, 2012). Feminist theory argues that violence against or sexual abuse of women is never about the physical act of violence and sexual assault, but rather about exerting power over women's bodies (Jones, 2002; McPhail, 2016). In the field of HIV and AIDS, it has been argued that hegemonic norms of masculinity perpetuate toxic and dangerous masculinities among men and are at the centre of gendered pandemics (Haddad, 2011; Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012). In a study investigating discursive constructions of hegemonic masculinity among rural youth in Nigeria, Mensah (2021) found that masculinity among young men is enacted through the indulgence of unprotected sex with multiple sexual partners. He argues that this risky behaviour is considered masculine privilege which exonerates them from practising safer sex. In media and popular culture studies, the concept has been used to explore the representation and construction of hyper-masculinity, which has been argued by scholars (Vokey, Tefft & Tysiaczny, 2013; Waling, 2017; Lewington, Sebar & Lee, 2018; Mishra, 2021) that it perpetuates the ideology of men as tough, violent, and dangerous. Furthermore, these representations are fuelled by a masculine gender ideology that men are powerful and superior, and cannot control their sexual drive, therefore their partners should readily be available to engage in intercourse whenever the men want them to (Vokey et al., 2013; Sikweyiya et al., 2020).

Though instrumental in theorising masculinities, Messerschmidt (2019) asserts that there is a need to analyse existing masculinities at three different levels: local, regional, and global. Luyt (2012) criticises hegemonic masculinity as not being considerate of the micro-level process that functions in men's negotiation of identity. He argues that at micro level, some men can adapt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable, but they can also distance themselves from it at any given moment, thus there is a need to analyse masculinities at different levels. The

local level analyses masculinity construction through social interaction and embodiment of social norms. Arguably, this is the level in which masculinity construction is informed and the level in which masculine negotiation takes place and where hegemonic masculinity is elevated. It is at this level that masculine formation also takes place for adolescent and teenage boys who are transitioning into manhood (Langa, 2020). It has been argued by scholars (Langa, 2020; Connell, 2005; Pyke, 2020) that masculinity construction is contextual, the local level is where this construction and negotiation takes place. Messerschmidt (2019) makes a point that the local level is the level that men get to pick and choose which masculinity to perform and the one they choose to distance themselves from depending on which one they can benefit from. Connell (2005) attributes this to being complicit in hegemonic masculinity because men benefit from not distancing themselves from them even though they are aware of its toxic traits. The regional level analyses masculinity as constructed and negotiated at a cultural and societal level, while the global level analyses masculinity as constructed at a transnational setting such as politics, media, and business (Luyt, 2012). It is the notion of multiple masculinities in one context and their experiences differ from one another.

In appropriating hegemonic masculinity in investigating gender, power and sexuality in the South African context, Morrell et al (2012) highlight the multiplicity of hegemonic masculinities in the South African context. To contextualise masculinity construction within the South African context, the engagement with masculinity in this context is considered through the local and regional level. Furthermore, the following section critically engages with the multiple hegemonic masculinities that exist within the South African context.

### **2.2.2 Contextualising masculinity in South Africa**

The study of men and masculinities within the South African context is very complex, as one needs to consider a variety of factors that contribute to the process of masculinity construction. The colonial past has created disadvantages based on race, class, and poverty, meaning that many men have not been able to live up to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity (Gibbs, Jewkes, Loura, Myrntinen, Sikweyiya & Washington, 2020). Pyke (2020) asserts that South African history has shaped gender relations, mapping out the course of men's subjective experiences and how they define their gender identity. Malinga and Ratele (2018) concur with Pyke (2020), asserting that the meaning of masculinity within the South African context, especially young masculinity, is constructed within and influenced by historical social context; a context that has

both colonial and apartheid systems that not only shaped social gender relations, but also took away a man's identity by reducing him to a boy (Ratele, 2021). Perhaps the starting point for contextualising masculinities in the South African context would be to provide a brief historical background of the study of men and masculinities and understand it from a postcolonial perspective.

Research on men and masculinities in South Africa has largely been located in the field of boyhood and manhood studies. However, there has been an emergent focus on gender and sexuality and its relations to understanding masculinities in diverse fields such as gender studies, queer studies, sociology, anthropology, politics, psychology and religion to name a few (Shafer and Ratele, 2023; Qambela, 2018; Scott, 2021; Langa, 2020). At the centre of masculinity studies and understanding the men in South Africa is unpacking how race played a role in how masculinities are perceived and constructed. Xaba (2001) in her exploration of struggle masculinities highlights not only the violence that has been attached to black men and their masculinity but also how those men who were involved in the struggle defined their identities. According to Ratele (2021), black men during apartheid which was a product of colonialism were not regarded as men by their white masters but as non-men, and garden boys whose only sense of self was attached to the labour they did. Colonialism can be defined as patterns of power, knowledge, being and meaning arising from the racial social stratification of the world population under Eurocentric power (Ratele, 2021). Colonialism introduced a social hierarchy where white European men were superior and powerful over non-European men. Morell (1998) asserts that colonisation transformed existing masculinities, and racialised gender relations and positions of power according to racial differences. Hegemonic masculinity during this period of colonisation related with white men; colonised men were not regarded as fully men and were seen as having no agency. The colonial and apartheid system stripped men of their masculine identities/manhood – they were referred to as boys and not considered fully men. Though, Ratele (2021) uses the concept of non-men when locating men in the colonial and apartheid era, this concept is still very much present in the post-colonial context. If we are to critically engage in the decolonial work, we must also acknowledge that present discourses of masculinity such as men being providers places those who cannot provide in the category of “non-men” because of their failure to live up to this expectation.

In their article exploring issues of power, gender and politics, Morell and colleagues (2012) argue that there is a power struggle between three hegemonic masculinities that exists in South Africa; white, black and African hegemonic masculinities. They further argue that race, which

shaped our context and perpetuated by apartheid shaped how men view themselves. From a gendered perspective, black men were emasculated during apartheid and white men had dominance over them, occupying a marginalized masculine hierarchy and had no power (Morell et al, 2012, Ratele, 2020). In a post-colonial/apartheid era, black men began redefining, and reconstructing their masculine identity, which was done mostly through occupying political power and asserting their hegemony using their new politically and democratically found freedom. White men/masculinity on the other hand asserted their hegemony through economic power as they controlled most economic resources such as land, privately owned businesses and access to funding opportunities. African hegemonic masculinity also wanted to assert its power from traditional and tribal perspective and wanting to distinguish itself to uphold the African values, heteronormative norms and moral standards in rural communities (Morell et al 2012). These racialized hegemonic forms of masculinity paved way for how men related with each other and how society engages with issues of race and gender,

The marginalisation of men or masculinities during apartheid era forced men to reconfigure their lives and masculinities. Though some might argue that coloniality has long passed in global south countries, and South Africa in particular, the masculinities hierarchy that still exists shows that coloniality still persists. There is no one “South African man”; instead, there is an Indian man, Coloured man, African/Black man, and White man (Dharani, Vergo & April 2021). These masculine categories are a result of the multiple layers that emerged after colonisation and apartheid, affecting not only how men relate to each other, but also to women.

According to Morell and Swart (2005), postcolonial perspective considers how men and masculinity have been analysed in third world countries using different theories. Third world countries are those countries that are undeveloped and underdeveloped in regions concentrated in South America, Africa, and some parts of Asia (Morrell & Swart, 2005:90). They argue that to understand man and masculinity in this context, they must be understood as multidimensional social subjects whose whole identity is shaped by the complex interaction not only with the state but also general society. Masculinity identity in the global south is characterised by complex issues such as poverty, unemployment, politics, gender, and religion. Ratele (2014) asserts that these complex issues cannot be ignored when theorising masculinities in a postcolonial context such as South Africa’s. He further urges for the decolonialisation of masculinity studies in Africa, given that these studies have largely been theorised using western or northern theories of masculinity that do not consider these complex issues in the process of masculinity construction for a black African man (Ratele, 2021). The

decolonisation of masculinity studies focused on the regional level where we considered the colonial effect on masculine identities within the African regions.

Morrell (2001), in his book titled *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, focuses on South African masculinities post-apartheid, considering factors such as economic labour, how men make sense of their masculinity and the changing landscape in which they must construct their masculinity in the new South Africa. He also acknowledges that violence and masculinity are yoked together in the South African context (Morell, 2001:6). With changes in the political and economic system, gender relations also changed. Morell (2001) asserts that the introduction of policies to reduce gender inequality changed and challenged existing masculinities. Lemon (2010) concedes that the challenging of masculinities brought upon a crisis of masculinity in which men must find new ways of being a man in the new South Africa. Men had to negotiate and reconstruct their masculinity to embrace the “new man” or contemporary man. This new, contemporary man presented not only in popular culture and media (Lemon, 2010), but also in public institutions as a man who does not ascribe to the stereotypical conceptions of masculinity; a man who is in favour of women’s liberation and is ‘domesticated’ (Morell, 2001:4).

The landscape in which masculinity is explored in South Africa has been largely in relation to violence, including violence against women, the reconstruction of men’s identities post-apartheid, and the crisis in which men find themselves. Hamber (2010) argues that South African masculinities are diverse, with some being more dominant than others, although this is constantly changing. She asserts that any discussion of masculinity must include the different racial and class positions in relation to femininity and other masculinities. The violent history of South Africa informed violent masculinities during apartheid. In her discussion on struggle masculinities, Xaba (2001) argues that young men who joined the political struggle during apartheid constructed the identities of young lions and liberators, gaining respect in their communities because they often used violence as means of affirming their masculinities. Post-apartheid, these masculinities are in crisis due to the social changes that have taken place and men have to negotiate and construct new masculinities as per current dispensation. The post-apartheid South African has diverse forms of masculinities; Morrell et al. (2012) points to White, African, and Black hegemonic masculinities that function in this context.

Hegemonic masculinity as a concept has foregrounded the understanding of the masculinity construction process and has shaped the scholarly arguments about masculinity. According to

Connell (1995:77), hegemonic masculinity is the configuration of gender practices which embody the currently accepted answer to the problem of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women and other men. This concept has been used within the South African context to understand men's need for power and control (Jewkes & Morell, 2018) and used synonymously with traditional masculinity (Everitt & Ratele, 2017). The concepts also foreground the formation of masculine identities among young men and adolescents (Fouten, Ratele, Shefer & Strebel, 2010; Langa, 2020). Ratele (2011:415) conceptualises hegemonic masculinity as things that males do to support the subordination of women and children. Elsewhere, he defines the concept as a mesh of social practices productive of gender hierarchies, which include violence and gender-based violence, that supports these hierarchies and the unequal power relationships between males and females as groups (Ratele, 2008:516). He further argues that the concept is not only evident in gender hierarchical order, but also in how economic, religious, recreational, and cultural institutions support male dominance and superiority (Ratele, 2011:415).

The cis-heteropatriarchal system sustains and maintains both the hegemonic and subordinate masculinity by influencing how men view themselves and creates boundaries and as to which masculinity received patriarchal dividends. The system further creates expectation that men must live up to and perform for them to successfully embody hegemonic masculinity. Howe (2019) argues that the system does not discriminate against non-heteronormative gender identities, but it also discriminates against those who do not meet the systematic requirement of being a dominant male. Those who do not embody this expectation which includes heterosexuality are systematically subordinated and do not enjoy the patriarchal dividends (Connell, 2005). Furthermore, if heterosexual men fail to live up to the dominant patriarchal notions of masculinity, are they still considered as "real man"? Men have no other choice but to patriarchal, regardless of their religious convictions and identity.

Ratele's conception of hegemonic masculinity speaks to the social realities, masculine hierarchy and gender hierarchy that exist in a post-colonial context. As a dominant gender practice, hegemonic masculinity embodies a culturally idealised form that serves the interest of a dominant group of men by legitimising and maintaining the patriarchal gender order (Luyt, 2013). However, this becomes problematic where there are multiple hegemonic masculinities that contend for power and dominance.

Morell et al. (2012:12) highlight three forms of hegemonic masculinities that exist within the South African context. Firstly, white masculinity, which represents the political and economic dominance of the white ruling class. As result of apartheid, the white minority had political and economic dominance which disadvantaged people of colour (Morell, 2001). Secondly, African masculinity, which represents rurally based masculinities that reside in and are perpetuated through indigenous systems and institutions. Hegemony in this context is measured through one's wealth, the wealth is measured by the land owned, number of cattle's and communal standing. In essence, this masculine identity goes beyond the performance and embodiment of masculinity attributes and behaviour and encompasses a wealth component that signifies successful performance of masculinity. Lastly, black masculinities, which represent masculinity emerging in the urbanisation and development distinct to townships. These townships emerged because of apartheid, where Africans were forcibly moved into geographical areas created for exclusive occupation by the black population (Morell et al., 2012:15). Black masculinity is hegemonic in the township context where male body, male sexuality, male bonding, social status and political standing yield power. The masculine attributes and behaviour include having multiple sexual partners, risk taking, heterosexuality and male bonding (Langa, 2020).

Given the different definition of masculinities by scholar (Connell, 2005; Morrell, 1998; Morrell et al, 2012; Langa, 2020), this study is located within the black and African masculinities which will be referred to interchangeably in this study. Black masculinities as defined by Morell et al (2012) and Langa (2020) is a masculine identity that is saturated within predominantly black townships. The constriction of this masculine identity follows a social script in which men must live up to and to which young boys are conditioned to embody (Langa, 2020). As young men transition into manhood, they have already been conditioned to the type of behaviour and attributes that are expected from them; heterosexual, dominant, multiple sexual partners, risky sexual behaviour and male bonding. Ratele et al (2007) concede that young men are conditioned not to be domesticated and taught that domestic chores are for women, they can only assist. It is also within this context that heteronormativity is entrenched in young men, but because their liberal situatedness they are able to explore masculine identities that are non-heteronormative (Langa, 2020). This does not mean that non-heteronormative masculinity is accepted, Langa (2020) highlights that they are tolerated.

Black masculinities are not independent of African masculinities, these two have a mutual exclusive relationship. African masculinities are located within the rural and semi-urban area

where traditional leadership still have authority and govern social order. As highlighted by Morrell and colleagues, it is concerned with preserving culture, traditions and moral regeneration of what it means to be African and African man at that. Unlike black masculinities which tolerate non- heteronormative masculine identity, African masculinities are homophobic to such masculinities. Ratele (2014) argues that African hegemonic masculinity is homophobic towards those men who do not embody hegemonic masculinity as they believe it threatens the African man's identity.

There is bound to be tension between the two masculine identities because of the different moral regeneration, the expression of male sexuality (Shefer et al, 2025) and embodied experiences of masculinity. As a black man who works in metropolitan city such as Johannesburg, I must embody a black masculine identity so that I am not ridiculed because of my rural upbringings and the stigma associated with being a Zulu man. Yet, when I go back to my semi-urban context in which we chose to settle with my family, I become an urban Zulu man.

Being located in the global south and in a post-colonial context, where men are trying to reconfigure their masculine identity amidst the democratic dispensation, I am aware of my blackness and my Africanness, along with the indigenous and modern knowledge systems that has informed my masculinity construction. In this project I argues that men in the global south cannot be theorized outside of their context, the structural and social factors that have influenced their embodied lived masculine experiences.

Black masculinities in South Africa are not only defined by geography but intersect powerfully with socio-economic status. In township spaces, material markers of success—such as fashionable clothing, expensive alcohol, cars, and the ability to provide financially—are crucial indicators of masculine respectability and dominance (Hunter, 2005; Gibbs et al., 2015). The township context, marked by unemployment, poverty, and systemic inequality, often leaves men with limited economic opportunities. In response, some men resort to hypermasculine behaviours, including crime or risky sexual activity, to assert dominance and recover a sense of power and agency (Ratele, 2013; Langa, 2010). In this way, socio-economic status not only shapes the conditions under which masculinity is performed but also contributes to stratified hierarchies of masculine power.

Men with higher socio-economic standing are more likely to be perceived as successful and influential, reinforcing the idea that economic provision is central to township masculinities.

Those who cannot meet these standards may feel emasculated or marginalised, contributing to a cycle of insecurity and gendered violence (Gibbs et al., 2015). This dynamic shows that the performance of urban masculinities cannot be understood outside the structural forces of capitalism, post-apartheid economic restructuring, and ongoing class-based exclusion.

Given the political and economic landscape of South Africa, these forms of hegemonic masculinities are also in contestation with each other. Black masculinity wants to be dominant over hegemonic masculinity, given the post-colonial and decolonisation process of naming man and regaining their sense of self, while white masculinity is resistant to giving up the privileges and resources that were afforded to them through the colonial and apartheid systems (Morrel, 2001; Morrell et al., 2012; Ratele, 2021). There is also a new form of masculinity that was formed because of this contestation by black and white hegemonic masculinities. Kiguwa and Langa (2013) refer to it as protest masculinity.

Protest masculinity refers to a gendered identity that is orientated towards a protest against the relations, production, and the ideal type of hegemonic masculinity (Walker, 2006:5). It is concerned with a distinctive, chaotic, and alienating form of masculinity, which some scholars such as Langa and Kiguwa (2013) have termed 'violent masculinity'. Seeing that struggle masculinities as explored by Xaba (2001) have become marginalised and excluded in the current context, one of the means of contesting and negotiating their masculinity, and their way of being included in the system is through protesting. Langa and Kiguwa (2013) explore how young men make sense of their manhood and their involvement in service delivery protest in relation to powerful men and women within the local government system. The participants in the study justified their involvement as not only protesting against the hegemonic power that has excluded them economically, but also because they fought in the struggle for freedom, and now they are excluded from the very system that was meant to make their lives better. Being unable to participate in the economy hinders these young men from performing their provider roles as prescribed by patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity, therefore, to an extent, they are viewed as useless and powerless (Langa & Kiguwa, 2013).

The dispensation of the postcolonial/post-apartheid era has brought changes within the political landscape. With the transfer of power, those previously disadvantaged men who had hoped that their lives would change and that they would be provided with better opportunities, are left with the reality that only a few enjoy the privileges of the new era. According to Kiguwa and Langa (2013), protest masculinities are young men's embodied experiences of being

disadvantaged in a system that is supposed to liberate them, and they are now challenging the dominant black masculinity that Morrell and colleagues refer to, especially in a context of service delivery protest. It can be argued that this form of masculinity is an extension or rebirth of the struggle masculinities that Xaba (2001) refers to when conceptualising the masculinities of those men whose identities are linked to the political struggle.

I understand that these manifestations of masculinities are informed by the systematic realities of cis-heteronormative patriarchy structure and frameworks. To effectively and critically engage with the systematic, one must engage this structure from an individual level and how it manifests itself in structures such as religion and culture/traditions. In thinking about masculinity from a traditional standpoint (Everitt-Penhale and Ratele, 2015) assert that we must be cognisant of the fact that traditions mean different things in different context and often used interchangeably with culture in critical men and masculinities scholarship.

At the core of this traditional or cultural construction of masculinity is heteronormative patriarchal system that dictates a socially accepted ideal of masculinity, hegemonic masculinity as explained by Connell (2005). Patriarchy, defined as all structures and ideologies that engender the domination and oppression of the weak, particularly women and children and other men (Plaatjies, 2011), dictates that men embody hegemonic ideal so that they can benefit from the system and enjoy the patriarchal dividends. This system that informs both religion and culture also inform our gender identity construction and how men and women relate to each other, promotes the hierarchal and social power, with men being the dominant one.

At the core of this patriarchal system is the cis-heteronormative ideology that prescribes the appropriate way of doing and performing gender. Franco-Rocha et al (2022) describes cis-heteronormativity as the relationship of heterosexual and cisgender privilege stemming from patriarchy. The heteronormative ideology as explained by van der Thorn, Pliskiy and Morhegenroth (2020) is a belief that there are two separate and opposing genders that are associated with natural roles; men and women; boy and girl. Heteronormativity asserts that people align their gender identity with their sex assigned at birth and be attracted exclusively to an opposite gender (Tamela, 2011). This systematic does not recognise non-heterosexual gender identities and therefore both men and women have no choice but to be heterosexual. The pervasiveness of heteronormativity has meant that individual within this patriarchal system can only construct their gender as either masculine or feminine, leaving no option for exploring the alternative.

The cis-heteronormative patriarchal system then feeds into culture and religious, dictating that men should construct their masculine identity within this system. For example, scholars (Qambela, 2021; Mfecane, 2018) assert that the culturally accepted way of being a man is by undergoing the initial process of uLwaluko within the Xhosa traditions. When young men go through this initiation process, they undergo circumcision and are equipped and taught what it means to be a man within the Xhosa context and what is expected on them as men. This process is also based within a heteropatriarchal lens that has been the staple of uLwaluko. Therefore, cis-heteronormativity is the norm in which young men transition from boyhood to manhood. This binds them in a singular dimension of masculinity that is hegemonic and patriarchal. Theatrically, the hierarchy of masculinity makes sense and provides order, however, men's relations are different. They all want some type of power and dominance to validate them and are constantly negotiating their masculinity.

### **2.2.3 Masculinity construction and negotiation**

As a male gendered identity (Morell, 2001), masculinity is socially constructed, performed, and negotiated (Connell, 2005; Ratele, 2010). According to Ratele (2010:559), masculinity is achieved through embodied activities that are socially constructed to define masculinity. Masculinity is a socially constructed gendered ideology and identity which is fluid and unnatural (Morrel, 1998). The fluidity of masculinity means that within any given social context there are multiple masculinities, and they are changing over time. Shefer, Ratele, Strelbel, Shabalala and Buikema (2007) assert that masculinity is constantly changing and contested through performance and normative versions of masculinity characterised by macho personality, hypersexuality, aggression and non-emotiveness.

The social hierarchy of masculinity as mentioned by Connell (2005) plays an important role in how men construct and negotiate their masculinity. Having multiple hegemonic masculinities in a context such as South Africa's, men constantly negotiate their masculinity in any space they enter (Langa, 2020; Pyke, 2020; Morell et al., 2012). There is a growing scholarship of Black masculinity within the South African context that is centred on the lived experiences of black men (Shefer et al., 2007; Langa, 2020; Gibbs et al., 2020; Pyke, 2020). Langa (2020) explores how young men construct their masculinity in the Alexandra township and how they navigate the social norms of masculinity. Gibbs et al. (2020) investigate hyper-masculinity – the dominant form of masculinity – that emerges from poverty and experiences of trauma and gender inequality, and how they can transform these masculinities through gendered

interventions. Pyke (2020) explores what it means to be a man in contemporary society in a township setting. These scholars highlight the complexities of black masculinities given the socio-political landscape of South Africa and the disadvantages caused by apartheid. This complexity is further perpetuated by culture and traditions that inform social and gender identities in South Africa.

Moolman (2013) asserts that social identities are complex practices that are informed and shaped through social relations and institutions. One of the main elements that shapes masculine identities among South African men is the provider characteristic, which became the main element in defining masculinity during apartheid and arguably remains the defining characteristic in contemporary society (Pyke, 2020). Sikweyiya, Nkosi, Langa, Operario and Lurie (2022) studied the burden of the provider role and how it influences black male minors' construction of their masculine identities, and the potential consequences it may have on their own and their family's health. The study showed that the provider role is an inescapable demand that is imposed by society and is also an internalised intrinsic part of their manhood. This role becomes impossible to achieve for many black men who are not employed, questioning their sense of masculinity (Pyke, 2020; Langa, 2020). Langa (2020) further argues that this masculine characteristic is non-negotiable.

Tradition and culture play an important role in the construction and negotiation of masculinity and ascribe different meanings to real manhood. As examples, manhood/masculinity is defined differently in the Xhosa and Zulu cultures. In her study of traditional and modern South Africa, Moolman (2017) uses two themes: social discourses on tradition and culture, and social discourses of modernity to unpack the blurred lines of masculinity practices. She asserts that masculinity is gained or achieved, not given. In the Xhosa tradition, for a boy to become a man (*Indoda*), he must go through the initiation process (Mfecane, 2016). As social discourse on tradition and culture, *Indoda* (traditionally circumcised man) is the most honoured form of masculinity and affords certain privileges and rights (Mfecane, 2016). Erlank (2017) asserts that *uLwaluko* is a rite of passage that confers masculinity for the Xhosa man. A man who is medically circumcised is not considered a real man within the Xhosa culture, he automatically falls within the subordinate masculinity (Connell, 2005; Mfecane, 2016). Within the Zulu culture, the discourses of *Isoka* and *Umnumzane* dominate the masculinity landscape (Ratele, Shefer, Strebel & Fouten, 2010). These discourses describe masculinity practices among the Zulu nation.

*Isoka* is a man who has multiple sexual partners and can be intimate with any woman he desires, while *Umnomzane* refers to a man who is married and the head of his household. Hunter (2010) asserts that being *Isoka* was central in cementing one's masculinity in Zulu culture, while a young Zulu man that does have multiple partners is referred to as *Isishimane*, a man who is scared to talk to with girls and without a single girlfriend. For the latter part, these discourses are informed by the traditional masculine ideology. Borgogna and McDermott (2022) argue that traditional masculine ideology not only sustains men's power over women, promoting the ideology that men and boys should be dominant and heterosexual, it also condones this masculine behaviour where they have to accept that men have more than one sexual partner. Shefer et al. (2007:03) assert that tradition demands that young men in their masculinity construction must take all manner of risks, especially sexual and mortal risks. These traditional or cultural notions of constructing masculinities within the Nguni culture is being threatened by HIV, AIDS and rates of unemployment. Qambela (2021) and Hunter (2010) argue that South African men, particularly Nguni men's path to attaining the status of *umnumzane* is threatened not only by the participation of women in the labour market, which prevents men from gaining their independence and affirming their manhood through paid labour, but also the high unemployment rate that prevents men from being active participants in the economy. The multiplicity of masculinities in the South African context also propels us to acknowledge the existence of other masculinities that are outside of the homosexuality spectrum.

“Any discussion of manhood in Africa is obviously inadequate if it does not consider same-sex desire”. (Ratele, 2011; 409)

Ratele's statement regarding the discussion of masculinity and manhood in the African context is based not only on the fluidity of masculinity as gendered identity, but also the reality of multiple masculinities that exist in any given society (Morrell, 2001; Connell, 2005; Ratele, 2011). There is vast scholarship in the African context that shows the existence of multiple masculinities within the continent: non-heteronormative masculinities, queer masculinities, and gender-nonconforming sexual identities (Kiguwa & Langa, 2017; Balogun & Bissell, 2018; Kiguwa, 2018; Owino, 2020; Scott, 2021). These scholars have highlighted that the continued resistance to and denial of gay masculinity and queer masculinities does not render them non-existent.

Balogun and Bissell (2018) assert that men perform their masculinity and sexuality differently. According to Connell (2005), gay or homosexual men occupy the category of subordinate

masculinity simply because they embody their masculinity outside of the hegemonic norms of masculinity. This category has also led homosexual men to not only experience homophobia and violence, but they are also not considered to be real men because they do not engage in heterosexual sex (Ratele, 2011; Balogun & Bissell, 2018; Kiguwa, 2018). Such homophobia and discrimination have led men who express non-heteronormative masculinities to negotiate their masculinity and sexuality amid cultural and traditional expectations of manhood (Balogun & Bissell, 2018). The core expectation of affirming masculinity is a man's ability to penetrate. Ratele (2011) asserts that a penis, a penetrative organ, has more powerful meaning than any organ and creature across different contexts. Therefore, an act of penetration that does not involve a vagina, where men penetrate each other (Kiguwa 2018), is seen as an act of homosexuality that falls outside the normative standards of sexuality. These men are embodying their masculinity differently; it does not make them less of a man than a heterosexual man.

#### **2.2.4 Masculinity and economic power**

Capitalism and patriarchy inform the systematic base of social order, gender ideology, gender order, and ensure the dominance of men. Harris (2015) argues that capitalism, introduced by colonialism in Africa, instituted the division of labour, with men being forced into the labour force and given the breadwinner role, while women were tasked with domestic tasks within the household. McLean (2023) asserts that the representation of men and masculinity within the African context has largely focused on men performing the provider/breadwinner role, which determines the man's ability to financially provide for their familial needs, maintaining economic power over women and children. The patriarchal gender order infers a cultural understanding that men should have power and authority over women and women should not have power over themselves (Whitehead, 2023:296). As explained by Harris (2015), the labour force prescribed men to have the role of being a provider and responsible for the familial wellbeing. McLean (2023) furthers this masculine role by referring to it as provider masculinity, referring to a man's capacity to be a good man, measured by his breadwinning abilities. It then becomes important to understand patriarchal bargaining, facilitated by gender ideology that takes place in the division of labour between women and men, ultimately enabling men to attain economic power over women. This economic power over women has multiple implication, including vulnerability to violence and power relations. As discussed in this section, social norms have socialised and conditioned us to accept that men are supposed to be the sole provider and women to become domesticated. However, the changing economic

landscape and gender roles, women are now afforded the same opportunities of employment as men and are active in the labour force. Dismantling the patriarchal notions of male superiority and the sole provision role.

According to Whitehead (2023:299), patriarchal bargaining asserts that husbands are supposed to acquire and maintain their family estate and provide their wives with money to purchase household goods and services. It also requires that women become housewives. Thus, bargaining maintains a cultural understanding that men are breadwinners and as such, must maintain power and authority over women. The most practical way of maintaining this power and authority over women is through economic power. Economic power in return sponsors male sexual entitlement over women's bodies.

It is important to understand that masculinity and economic power are exclusively related to each other. Izugbara and Egesa (2019) argue that in a context where masculinity is affirmed through economic provision, self-sufficiency, and capacity to provide, those men who do not have economic power fall out of the category of real men and are emasculated. Gibbs, Sikweyiya and Jewkes (2014) further asserted that masculinity in heterosexual patriarchy is centred on male provision. They argue that a man's ability to provide for his household becomes a measure of successful embodiment of masculinity. The inability of men to provide because of the high unemployment rate excludes them from the patriarchal status and affirmation of masculinity. Traditional masculinity is premised on economic provision in which men are positioned as benevolent patriarchs (Gibbs et al., 2014: 4). Their inability to secure permanent employment then threatens this patriarchal position of being a provider, therefore, emasculating men and forcing them to explore alternative ways of expressing their power. It has been argued by Jewkes (2002) that unemployment has changed gender roles in society and threatens the social hierarchy in which men are considered as the sole provider at the top of the food chain. This disturbance of this social system not only changes or threatens men's masculine identity, but it also destabilises the patriarchal system in which these gendered expectations are built on and the masculine ideology that informs masculinity construction.

According to Silberschmidt (2001), the patriarchal system rests on positioning men as socio-economic providers to ensure their dominance. Economic power gives men the ability to establish and sustain a household, including asserting power over women (Gibbs et al., 2014). As argued above, for a man to be considered a real man in Nguni culture, they must be able to independently establish and maintain *umuzi* (homestead); it is the only way they can attain a

title of *uMnunzane*. Furthermore, Izugbara (2015) argues that economic power establishes men's authority within a heterosexual intimate relationship, which becomes essential in maintaining that relationship. Quayle, Lindegger and Brittain et al, (2018) assert that although women value non-patriarchal masculinity, traditional ideals of masculinity were most valued in the context of romance or intimate relationship. They further argue that women preferred to have an intimate relationship with men who have the economic power and resources to be able to perform their expected role of being a provider within the relationship (Quayle et al., 2018). Izugbara and Egesa (2018) also concede that real men are those men who are perceived to be providers for their families and having control over them. The changing socio-economic landscape compromises a man's ability to embody and perform the provider role.

The terrain of masculinity and violence is quite complex and very layered based on context and factors contributing to violence, specifically towards women. Elsewhere, I argue that masculinity as violent performance has been a norm that is not only portrayed in media but also how society has centred this violence within intimate partner relationships. The expectation around men and socio-economic wealth and women have come to expect this from men (Quayle et al, 2018). Quayle et al (2018) argues that women are not attracted to men who do not embody hegemonic norms of masculinity and expectations, including men being providers. However, most men cannot live up to this expectation, especially in an economically vulnerable climate such as South Africa which has the highest unemployment rate.

The current economic context to some degree threatens men's ability to live up to the expectation of being a provider and destabilizes the patriarchal bargaining system that has shaped most intimate relationships (Whitehead, 2023). The affirmation of a man's masculinity through economic power has placed them at a disadvantage because failure to live up to this standard, they are emasculated. In the context of intimate partner violence (Jewkes et al, 2002) assert that one of the risk factors for intimate partner violence is women and poverty, their dependence on their partners for financial support. Patriarchal bargaining facilitates dependence to ensure that men remain superior, dominant and women become dependent of men financially.

The shifting economic realities for many African countries have diminished economic opportunities for men and have undercut their earning capabilities (Whitehead, 2023:296). McLean (2021) further asserts that the rate of unemployment has brought on a masculinity crisis that has been used to describe men as violent, dominant, and irresponsible. One cannot

argue that the shifting of economic state does not affect ideals of masculinity, it does so by threatening the patriarchal gender order; men's relationship with patriarchy and how they navigate this landscape of not living up to the patriarchal ideals. The inability of men to actively participate in the economy threatens the economic power they have over women, strains their ability to provide and jeopardises the patriarchal bargaining that has ensured men's dominance and control (Whitehead, 2023).

Gibbs et al. (2014) assert that it compromises men's ability to exercise power, because they need this economic power. These socio-economic struggles bring a strain as men cannot fulfil their expected role of being a provider, and they suffer from a feeling of inadequacy (Silberschmidt, 2001). This provider ideology has placed such pressure and expectation on men that they also have to police each other when one is perceived not to live up to this expectation and responsibility (Sikweyiya et al., 2022). If economic power is a gateway to asserting power over women and children and affirming one's masculinity as a real man, what happens if that power is taken away?

Studies of intimate partner violence and feminist theories have argued that the lack of economic resource has led to men exercising their power and control differently. According to Gibbs et al. (2014), because of men's inability to exert power over women through economic means, they seek other ways of maintaining that power and respect, resulting in violence. Jewkes (2002, 2011) argues that patriarchy has made men superior to women, and their ability to exercise this superiority is based on a man's ability to live up to this expectation. She asserts that poverty and unemployment have forced society to accept that gender roles are changing, men no longer have the same economic power over women, thus become emasculated as this signals failure to successfully perform their masculinity. The perceived threat to masculinity due to inability to provide leads to intimate partner violence/ GBV. Jewkes (2002) argues that lack of economic resource puts a strain on intimate relationship and because men are expected to fulfil the provider role, they are often emasculated when they cannot provide financially. Economic power gives men power over women and a way in which they affirm their masculine dominance, if they no longer have the means to provide, they resort to violence as an alternative way of asserting their dominance (Jewkes et al, 2002; Jewkes, 2002; Mbiti-Dikgole, 2023).

There is a need to deconstruct the traditional masculine ideology and the patriarchal expectation of men to embody these masculinity roles to affirm their masculinity. Despite the cultural relevance and expectation of these roles, the socio-economic factor does affect how men

construct and enact their masculinity negatively (Gibbs et al., 2014; Ratele, 2014). The decolonial context provides men with the opportunity to redefine their manhood. However, structural factors impede this opportunity because of the heteropatriarchal notions of masculinity and the continued policing of living up to these expectations – they are oppressive to men who cannot live up to these ideals.

Though traditional masculine ideology has defined how men should construct their masculinity, South Africa's post-colonial context offers men the ability to redefine and construct a “new man”, and to renegotiate what it means to be a man in a contemporary society (Pyke, 2020; Langa, 2020). Langa (2020) asserts that over time, men have begun to feel the burden of being constrained and defined by hegemonic masculinity. He notes that power struggles are central in the experiences of masculinity and the cost of preserving this masculine identity can be costly. To facilitate the construction of a new man and the transformation of hegemonic masculinities, theological or religious scholarship has adopted redemptive masculinities as a tool for constructing positive and life-giving masculinity.

### **2.2.5 Critical masculinity studies and religion in the African context**

Critical men and masculinity studies in Africa come at the backdrop of toxic masculinities that have been problematised and continue to perpetuate gendered pandemics (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012). Religious/faith communities are believed to play an integral role in the construction of masculinity and are historical custodians of the patriarchal social order (Meyer, 2017). This section discusses the intersection of masculinity and religion within the African context, the extent to which religion influences the masculinity construction process within the Christian landscape, and the social impact this has on both men and women.

Masculinities in sub-Saharan Africa have become problematised due to the continued perpetuation of gendered pandemics such as HIV, AIDS and gender-based violence (Van Klinken, 2010; Chitando, 2011; Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012; Togarasei, 2013). Religion has been a key role player in the masculinity construction process within the African landscape, with scholars (Van Klinken, 2011; Owino, 2012; Chitando, 2013; Meyer, 2017) arguing that religion influences the dominant discourses of what it means to be a man and the expectation that comes with that role. Religion as an institutionalised group activity in which members act in a specific manner in a specific context and are guided by doctrinal beliefs and practices (Meyer, 2017). Such doctrinal beliefs influence gendered identities and the process in which they are constructed. Chitando and Biri (2013) assert that religion, through indoctrination of

beliefs and practices, creates an image of man and imposes norms of being a man. Men are then expected to live up to and construct their masculinity through these prescribed norms of being a man.

Owino (2012) asserts that masculinities within religious spaces are constructed through theological belief systems that construct the meaning and inform the perception of what it means to be a man. The dominant theological beliefs that inform masculinity are that of male headship and leadership (Owino, 2012) and godly/biblical manhood idealised by the neo-Pentecostal movement (Van Klinken, 2011). Owino (2012) further argues that masculinity is perceived through masculine responsibility, male headship, and protectors. According to Van Klinken (2013:118), biblical manhood defines the heart of masculinity that is well meaning and has the responsibility to lead, provide and protect. These ideologies of masculinity are maintained and constructed through theological inspired texts that impose the hierarchical gender structure (Chitando, 2012; Owino, 2012). This ideal, though perceived to be far removed from patriarchal ideology, is constructed within a patriarchal framework that still privileges men with an expectation that one needs to obtain and maintain his manhood/masculinity status through responsibility. This responsibility requires that men must take their rightful leadership position within their own families and society (Van Klinken, 2011). The perception of manhood as a position of leadership and headship is informed by Pauline teachings of male headship in Ephesians 5:23<sup>2</sup> (Togarasei, 2013). Togarasei (2013) argues that these teachings of male headship and leadership produce toxic and dangerous masculinities while maintaining the structure of male dominance and female submission.

This religious and biblical conception of masculinity is conceptualised within the patriarchal framework (Van Klinken, 2010) and influenced by the image of the male God. From a biblical perspective, Smit (2017) asserts that the interrelationship between the construction of masculinity and religion is heavily influenced by the masculine image of God. This ideological notion of a male God legitimises the hegemony of men within the Christian faith landscape which is patriarchal in nature. Van Klinken (2017) argues that the assumed maleness of God is inherent to systems of power that benefit men and those who pass as normative male.

Religion values this patriarchal ideology of masculinity and reaffirms man's power and authority. African feminist theologians such as Nadar (2009) argue that it enables men to

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<sup>2</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the Church, his body and is himself its Saviour. (ESV)

control and abuse women with the use of discursive power. In a context where there has been a strong call for the transformation of masculinity, religio-cultural socialisation of masculinities contradicts what it means to be a man. Owino (2012) highlights this contradiction in his study of biblical masculinity in the Mighty Men Conference, where he shows that men often struggle between biblical masculinity and traditional masculinity because they are both constructed and conceptualised under the patriarchal framework. Traditionally, men are expected to be leaders, command respect and demonstrate emotional intelligence and toughness (Chitando & Biri, 2013). Religion expects men to display traditional norms of masculinity, but it must be enacted in a godly and biblical manner that is based on mutual respect and love (Van Klinken, 2013). The ambiguity and the absence of a concise model of masculinity within the African Christian faith landscape leave men in a constant contestation of their masculine identities and they must continually navigate the traditional and religious norms of masculinity. Religion and culture as social construct are mutually exclusive and feed off from each other. Culture through traditional masculine ideology maintains a specific male gender ideology that reflect a culturally acceptable norms of masculinity; that is hegemonic and cisheteronormative. Religion on the other hand conforms to these heteronormative norms of masculinity and further required that the embodiment of these ideals are mandatory for men.

To challenge these dominant patriarchal ideologies of masculinity within the African Christian faith landscape, there is a call to transform masculinity. Togarasei (2013) asserts that although religion has been used as a double-edged sword against women, it can still produce responsible and life-giving masculinities. Chitando and Biri (2013) explore the adoptions and use of Pentecostal teachings and beliefs to transform masculinity through its redemptive theology. In this theology, they look at how a version of manhood, which uses Jesus as the perfect model of transformed masculinity. This transformed and redeemed masculinity concept will be laboured more in the following section discussing masculinity construction in the African Pentecostal context.

### **2.3 African Pentecostalism**

Pentecostalism is a branch of Christianity that emphasises the apostolic pneumatologically experiences such as divine healing, prophesy and speaking in tongues (Mofokeng & Modise, 2019). As a movement, Pentecostalism was founded by John G. Lake in his missionary journey to South Africa (Anderson, 2004), and is based on events that took place on the day of Pentecost

as described in the book of Acts 2:1-4.<sup>3</sup> On the day of Pentecost, Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in unknown tongues (Kgatlé, 2017). Scholars (Anderson, 1992; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Mashai, 2013; Kaunda, 2015; Lindhardt, 2015) assert that Pentecostalism was introduced by the revival that took place in Azusa Street, Los Angeles. It is documented that during this revival, there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit similar to the experience described in Act 2, where people began speaking in tongues and received deliverance and healing (Anderson, 1992; Nel, 2014). This revival gave birth to Pentecostalism, an evangelical movement with a fundamental belief that the message of the Gospel is preached, centring Christ crucified at the cross (Mofokeng & Modise, 2019) and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Mashai (2013) defines Pentecostalism as an experience of the Spirit in which two subsequent and different crisis experiences in the life of a believer, i.e. conversion and spiritual baptism, are emphasized. Kgatlé (2017) expands on Mashai's (2013) definition of Pentecostalism as an expression of Christianity that emphasises the ecstatic speech in an unknown tongue as proof of Holy Spirit baptism.

Anderson (1992) asserts that spiritual baptism distinguishes Pentecostal Christianity from the rest. The fundamental principle of Pentecostalism is the evidence of speaking in tongues (Garrard, 2009). The speaking of an unknown tongue by Pentecostals is evidence that they have been baptised by the Spirit, which solidifies their identity as Pentecostal believers. Kgatlé (2017) argues that Pentecostal spiritual experience is the hallmark of Pentecostalism – without this characteristic, your religious affiliation within Pentecostalism is questioned. This fundamental belief is deeply embedded in classical Pentecostal churches, along with the belief in conversion and salvation. To sum up fundamental beliefs of Pentecostalism, Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) defines it as a stream of Christianity that emphasises salvation in Christ as a transformative experience brought by the working of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostalism in Africa was met with a lot of resistance, as it was believed to be part of the colonial project by American missionaries (Anderson, 1991, 2004; Kula, 2008). However, it found its own identity within the African people by providing a dynamic Christianity, which meets African needs with a theology and practices of the Holy Spirit that are contextualised and biblical (Kgatlé, 2017:03). According to Kaunda and John (2020) African Pentecostalism

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<sup>3</sup> When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested[a] on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

refers to Pentecostal and Charismatic Christian expression of faith found in Africa. Kulu (2008) describes it as setting of the Gospel in Africa. It describes the Christian communities who attribute their daily life experiences and interaction with the world to the working of the Holy Spirit (Kaunda & John, 2020:2). As an indigenous world view, African Pentecostalism responds to the encounters of various African world views (Mofokeng & Kgatle, 2017). It has provided a culture of continuity by responding to identifiable characters regarding pneumatic and charismatic religiosity that exist in a traditional society such as Africa (Kalu, 2008). African Pentecostalism is concerned with the primary working of the Holy Spirit and the practice of spiritual gifts without ignoring the cultural and religious traditions of African people (Biri, 2020).

According to Kaunda (2017), there are four waves of African Pentecostalism that exist in the African context. Firstly, Classical Pentecostals that have been operating in Africa since 1908 and was brought into Africa through missionaries. Classical Pentecostals still hold the belief of the working and experience of the Holy Spirit as cornerstone of their faith (Kaunda, 2017). Anderson (1992) identifies the Apostolic Faith Mission, Assemblies of God, and Full Gospel Church of God as classical Pentecostal churches in Africa. Kgatle (2017) asserts that classical Pentecostals believe in salvation through Christ. Secondly, the Charismatic Pentecostals/Movement, which Mashai (2013) defines as a movement born out of classical Pentecostals and still upholds the fundamental Pentecostal beliefs, functions and remains within traditional churches to bring about spiritual renewal (Mashai, 2013; Kaunda, 2017). Thirdly, Neo-Pentecostalism, which are churches who have their origins in classic Pentecostalism. They are largely influenced by the social, political, and democratic landscape (Anderson, 2004; Kaunda, 2017). Mofokeng and Kgatle (2019) assert that neo-Pentecostalism leans more towards personality cultism, as the founder dominates everything and has historically been plagued with allegations of abuse. Lastly, Prophetism which Kaunda (2017) asserts as a spirit-type prophetic movement within the classical African Initiated Churches and other traditional African prophetic movements. These waves of Pentecostalism have influenced the Pentecostal landscape in Africa and the spirituality of those who identify as Pentecostals. Before engaging in the discussion of Pentecostal doctrine of rebirth, Pentecostal masculinity, and its appropriation of media, it is important to understand the gender and sexuality issue within the context of Pentecostal churches as it influences gender identity construction.

### **2.3.1 Gender, sexuality and African Pentecostalism**

According to Shingange (2023), the hegemony of heterosexuality within the Christian landscape has influenced how we perceive gender, sexuality, and the bodily relationship with God. The growing Pentecostal movement in the African continent as highlighted above has also been influenced in socio-political issues, especially issues of gender and sexuality, where non-heteronormative sexuality has been considered un-African, ungodly and non-Christian (Bompani & Brown, 2015; Mbabazi, 2020; Owino, 2020). Tamela (2011:640) defines heteronormativity as a social construct that assumes the existence of two genders/sexes and views the human sexual relationship between a man and a woman as being natural and normal, leaving no other possibilities. Manyonganise (2020) argues that issues of gender and sexuality have been matters that are discussed privately within the African continent. The emergence and presence of HIV and AIDS forced the continent to acknowledge that firstly, people are having sex, and secondly, it is no longer a private matter as people living with HIV, a sexually transmitted disease, needed to get anti-retroviral therapy (Bompani & Brown, 2015; Manyonganise, 2020). The Pentecostal church, however, has not been forthcoming in discussing issues of gender and sexuality.

Togarasei (2020) asserts that the church has been vocal about many social ills affecting southern Africa, however, it has not yet discussed issues of human sexuality, except when preaching and condemning other non-heteronormative gender and sexuality expressions. She argues that sexuality within the Christian faith landscape has been discussed in relation to lust, not something that needs to be expressed outside of the institution of marriage and for the purpose of procreation. The presence of other sexualities within the continent of Africa has largely been either ignored or not entertained, because it challenges the patriarchal foundations that limit discourse of gender and sexuality within the heteronormative framework. This may be due to a variety of reasons. Zhou and Landa (2020:237) argue that traditional culture and religions struggle to decode sexuality itself, let alone the various and complex expressions thereof. The religious struggle to decode and understand various gender and sexual expressions is informed by the doctrinal standpoints of many religious organisations or movements and their biblical understanding and interpretation of gender and sexuality. Furthermore, Owino (2020:332) asserts that the dynamics in which gender and sexuality are addressed in Pentecostal churches aim to safeguard and protect the heteronormative moral position that upholds patriarchal notions of gender and sexuality.

Pentecostal doctrine and traditions are informed by the infallible Word of God which informs their religious beliefs and views (Kaunda, 2020; Owino, 2020; Zhou & Landa, 2020). Human sexuality in this context is understood within a heterosexual and heteronormative perspective that is informed by the literal hermeneutical interpretation of Genesis 1:28a “God blessed them and, said ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it...’”.<sup>4</sup> The literal interpretation of this scripture implies that expressions of sexuality should be for the purpose of reproduction and the fulfilment of this commandment from God. From a heteronormative standpoint, this is between a man and a woman and excludes non-heterosexual men and women.

This discontent of homosexuality within the Pentecostal movement in Africa is influenced by the perceived threat to the family structure, the crisis of masculinity (Owino, 2014, 2020), and the patriarchal society that is founded on maintaining gender imbalance and the inequalities between men and women, and does not cater for other sexualities (Shingange, 2023). Tamela (2011) challenges this heteronormative stance of Christianity in Africa, arguing that heteronormativity was constructed by missionaries during the colonial era when they came to Africa to introduce the Gospel of God. Debates about sexuality in the African context are fundamentally based on religious and biblical elements and religio-cultural beliefs and attitudes that continue to support these patriarchal norms and values (Shingange, 2023).

Mbabazi’s (2020) historiography on Congolese gender and sexuality proves the existence of homosexual behaviours and practices in traditional African communities. However, he argues that male homosexuality was situational and not a lifestyle. Situational in a sense that when men went to war, they brought their “boy-wives” to perform the duties that would normally be performed by their female wives at home. This acknowledgment of the existence of homosexual behaviour in Africa disproves the religious notions that same-sex behaviour is un-African (Bompani & Brown, 2015). The missionaries, as argued by Tamela (2011), promoted euro-centric expressions of sexuality that were and are confined within heteronormativity, and Christianity became the custodian of regulating sexuality and gender within the African context.

According to Owino (2020), the Pentecostal Charismatic has been considered homophobic and accused of perpetuating discriminatory remarks through religious discourses towards non-heteronormative sexualities. The Pentecostals in Uganda have been instrumental in the promotion of the Anti-Homosexuality Act and the public perception of sexuality. Bompani and

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<sup>4</sup> English Standard Version

Brown (2015) argue that Pentecostals have influenced the media packaging of sexuality as something that is sacred, seen through heteronormative lenses that promote family values and patriarchal society. They have particularly done so in print media, where newspapers that were publishing content that was deemed homosexual or promoted non-family values concerning sexuality, were shut down. Pentecostalism promoted sexuality that adhered to the social and cultural constructs of sexuality, which places the importance on reproduction and moral behaviour (Bompani & Brown, 2015). Homosexuality in this instance is considered immoral and lustful behaviour that does not uphold family values and does not seek to reproduce as informed by the religious discourse of reproduction and multiplication. Nel (2019:528) explains that homosexual acts in the Bible were frowned upon because it did not serve the purpose of procreation and therefore implied a wastage of seed. This reiterates the argument made by Togarasei (2020) that human sexuality within Pentecostalism is addressed and embodied from a perspective of reproduction.

Furthermore, Owino (2020) argues that the ideal of godly masculinity and manhood as developed within the discourse of male sexuality and the biblical ideal is threatened by the idea of queer masculinity. In his reflection of the Pentecostal-Charismatic church and its stance on gender and sexuality, he asserts that gay men are considered sinners because they distort the ideal of masculinity within the Christian faith landscape. Mbabazi (2020:353) also asserts that Pentecostal homophobia towards gay men is based on the fact that it is not compatible with the biblical teachings of marriage and sexuality. In this context, the sexuality of gay men becomes irreconcilable with those heterosexual males who not only uphold Pentecostal beliefs but also conform to the patriarchal discourses of being a man and embodying the idealised godly masculinity (Owino, 2020). According to the doctrine of rebirth, which is discussed in the following section, the redemption of the male body must automatically work itself out into the sexuality of a heterosexual born-again man and embody heterosexual masculinity (Bompani & Brown, 2015; Owino, 2020). This implies that for a homosexual man to be born again or saved, they must reconcile their sexuality with the heterosexual embodiment of masculinity, leaving no room for non-heterosexual men within the Pentecostal context.

Owino (2020) suggests that the shifting of traditional gender roles, which are constitutionally imbued, seeks to give equal rights to all individuals regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation and religion, and forces Pentecostals to acknowledge the embodiment of non-heteronormative sexuality in the interest of gender transformation and gender equality. The continued framing of gender and sexuality through heteronormative lenses not only hinders the

exploration of different forms of embodied masculinities within a religious context, but it also limits public discussion and participation in critically engaging with issues of gender, sexuality, and religion in the African context. The following section delves deeper into understanding the Pentecostal and theo-theological understanding, construction and embodiment of born-again religious identity.

### **2.3.2 Born-againism**

As a fundamental belief and tradition of Pentecostalism, an individual must receive salvation through the Holy Spirit. Kaunda (2017), in her understanding of the Pentecostal theological trajectory, she identifies soul winning as the divine commandment that Pentecostalism as an evangelical movement should concern itself with. Salvation, commonly known as conversion, new birth or being born again, is a doctrinal concept that has different theological meanings (Hamilton, 2017). According to Manglos (2010), salvation or conversion implies a radical change and transformation in religiosity and behaviour. One must accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, change from old behaviour and accept a new way of life. Having accepted Christ as Lord and Saviour through conversion, one is now a new creation and born again. This new creation/rebirth or born-again doctrine is informed by the verse in 2 Corinthians 5:17.<sup>5</sup> In understanding this doctrine of rebirth, Manglos (2010) asserts that being born again is a transition to a moral lifestyle where the individuals enter a close relationship with God. Hamilton (2017) further asserts that it is an experience of presence, a divinely initiated personal experience with a drastic change of heart which continues throughout the life of a believer. As a religious identity, being born again is a distinct phenomenon within Pentecostal traditions, a boundary marker between true faith and repetitive religious practices (Manglos, 2010; Hamilton, 2017).

The born-again doctrine favours the understanding that rebirth is an inward experience of the soul (Hamilton, 2017). Rebirth is essential in an evangelical movement such as Pentecostalism, as it symbolises justification through the forgiveness of sins and the indwelling of God in the heart of a believer. Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) asserts that rebirth happens through an encounter with God, bringing enormous transformation in a person's life. Therefore, it is no longer just about the internal work of the Holy Spirit, but it must also manifest through behaviour and maintaining a moral high ground. This personal moral transformation is a state where an individual enters a reciprocal relationship with a divine being where one commits to adhering

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<sup>5</sup> 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. [a] The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

to a new moral lifestyle (Manglos, 2010). To summarise the theological structure and doctrine of rebirth or being born again, Hamilton (2017:21) offers a threefold understanding of the rebirth:

- Experience of radical change in one's personal life through the divine
- Change in one's status before God – fundamental change in identity, one is justified or saved from eternal condemnation, and
- Subjective experience of an additional kind of presence: the immediate, mystical, and indescribable presence of God himself.

This threefold gives an understanding of who a Pentecostal born-again believer is and of their daily lived experiences. As part of the transforming masculinities project within the religious and theological landscape, scholars (Van Klinken, 2013; Togarasei, 2014; Chitando & Kilonzo, 2018; Gabaitse, 2020) have looked at the born-again Pentecostal man to explore the contours of transformative masculinities and how Pentecostal masculinities challenge hegemonic norms of masculinity. In their engagement with masculinity within the Pentecostal context and the doctrine of rebirth/born-againism, these scholars (Van Klinken, 2013; Togarasei, 2014; Chitando & Kilonzo, 2018; Gabaitse, 2020) have conceptualized masculinity in this context to explore the embodied meanings of this masculine identity. Informed by the redemptive nature of the religious discourse, redeemed masculinities are considered as an alternative to hegemonic masculinity and Pentecostalism provides contours in which this identity can be explored. The following section discusses the construction of masculinities within the Pentecostal faith traditions in Africa.

#### **2.4 Pentecostal masculinity**

Studies of men, masculinity and religion in Africa have focused on the negative connotations that are associated with masculinities, as they are at the centre of gendered pandemics globally. Within the African context, gendered pandemics such as HIV and AIDS and Gender Based Violence have been attributed to patriarchal hegemonic norms of masculinity that perpetuate toxic masculinities, which consequently puts women and children at a vulnerable place (Van Klinken, 2010; Haddad, 2011; Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012). According to Van Klinken (2013), concerns regarding masculinities within the African context are informed by the work of Concerned African Women Theologians whose work critically engages with issues of toxic masculine ideals, patriarchy, violence against women through the lenses of feminist theology.

To remedy this situation, Chitando and Chirongoma (2012) advocate for redemptive masculinities to be used as a religious resource to construct positive and life-giving masculinities that are in favour of gender justice and equality. This religious resource has been used to frame redeemed and alternative masculinities within civil society and particularly religious/faith communities. Used to show the ineffectiveness of structural and systematic factors such as patriarchy and attempt to transform masculinity in African context (Van Klinken, 2016), redemptive masculinity allows for optimism about the possibilities of man changing and adapting a life-giving masculinity (Chitando and Chirongoma, 2012). Due to its fast-growing nature, Pentecostalism as a religious system has been used to explore the contours of redemptive masculinities and the construction of an alternative masculinity that's transformed, liberated and redeemed (Chitando and Kilonzo, 2018). In the same breath, it becomes theatrically important that we centre this masculinity within the African masculinities as argued by (Ratele, 2011) and not conceptualise this masculine identity outside of the African context. In a much s Pentecostal masculinity is a religious identity that is located in redemptive masculine theory, socio-economic, socio-political and structure still impacts the process of masculinity construction as be discussed in the proceeding chapter.

Pentecostalism emphasises the importance of radical conversion, a transformation experience where a person gives their life to Jesus Christ and becomes born again (Van Klinken, 2012). For men, this means they must change in moral behaviour, give up their toxic behaviour, and denounce hegemonic norms of masculinity such as aggression, womanising, dominance, control, sexually risky behaviour, multiple sexual partners and become family-orientated men (Lindhardt, 2017; Burchardt, 2020). Men are giving up their hegemonic and traditional masculine identities to become new men/ new creations in Christ. Lindhardt (2015) argues that the conversion to being born-again implies that men turn away from a public sphere where masculine identities are traditionally constructed and gravitate towards the private sphere in which they are committed to traditional ideals of family and their roles as breadwinners.

The process of masculinity construction is very complex, and its characteristics are prescribed by various institutions such as church, family, society, and media. The doctrines of rebirth or being born again, and the centrality of the Holy Spirit informs, shapes, and influences how Pentecostal born-again man constructs his masculinity. Gabaitse (2020) asserts that these doctrines have the potential to shape new and liberating masculinities that strive towards gender equality. Pentecostal masculinity is a form masculinity that denounces the dominant hegemonic masculinity ideal (Gabaitse, 2020:74). This masculinity ideal is guided by nuclear family

values and sexual monogamy and operates through sacrificial love and service as demonstrated by Jesus Christ (Burchardt, 2017; Gabaitse, 2020).

Pentecostal masculinity is also oppositional to traditional and hegemonic masculinity. Lindhardt (2015) asserts that Pentecostal masculinity is what patriarchy would consider a soft, non-dominant and domesticated man who does not ascribe to hegemonic notions of masculinity. Scholars (Togarasei, 2014; Chitando & Kilonzo, 2018; Gabaitse, 2020) concur by arguing that Pentecostal doctrines remodel, mould and give men some direction and responsibility in their immediate environments. In his study investigating the model of masculinity and gender authority in the context of prevailing hegemonic, traditional, and liberal masculinities in South Africa, Burchardt (2020) asserts that liberal and Pentecostal masculinities are visible through performative acts that distance an individual from hegemonic and traditional masculinity. Though this might be a step in the right direction and an alternative, Pentecostal masculinities seem not to have entirely been liberated from the heteropatriarchal frame in which construct their identities (Gabaitse, 2020). As a Pentecostal man, I am still bound by these heteropatriarchal ideals of manhood and cannot explicitly distance myself from them because of the social expectation on me as a man.

Men within the Pentecostal traditions are encouraged to gain honour and respect by being honourable husbands and fathers, which is the true definition of manhood in Pentecostal culture, whereas culturally, masculinity is affirmed by performative acts such as aggression, assertiveness, multiple sexual partners and dominance (Lindhardt, 2015). Van Klinken (2012) in his study with Zambian born-again men, asserts that after conversion, men do not automatically become a new man, but they strive to become one. Pentecostalism reconstructs what it means to be a man, redefining manhood as inspired by biblical manhood or godly manhood.

Although Pentecostal masculinity provides a skeleton for transformed and liberated masculinity, it has also been critiqued. Pentecostalism puts an expectation on men to fulfil their roles as heads, leaders, providers, and protectors of their families. Chitando and Kilonzo (2018) assert that within the Pentecostal context, there is an understanding that men should work towards prosperity and recognition so that they affirm their masculinity through provision. They further argue that they are encouraged to take up leadership and bring prosperity to their household. Furthermore, Gabaitse (2020) argues that although Pentecostal doctrines reconstruct traditional and hegemonic masculinity, Pentecostal masculinity still functions

within a patriarchal frame of hegemonic masculinity. She asserts that Pentecostal hermeneutics still encourage male headship, leadership and dominance, which have been proven to perpetuate dangerous masculinities among Christian men (Phiri, 2001; Gabaitse, 2020).

Born-again men are still expected to uphold traditional and hegemonic norms of masculinity by performing their masculinity roles, yet they are also to embody a transformed, liberated Pentecostal masculinity. Biblical manhood, according to Van Klinken (2013), and Godly manhood (Owino, 2012) view male headship, leadership, and responsibility as fundamental roles of Pentecostal men. The argument made here is threefold. Firstly, the concept of headship defines a man's position in any relationship or in this case, religious space that he is part of. The headship of a man is central to the maintenance of a heterosexual marriage institution as instituted by God. It gives sole authority and autonomy to a man. Gabaitse (2014) asserts that this principle of male headship is accompanied by the theological submission of the wife, which is very common in Pentecostal hermeneutics. Furthermore, Chitando and Kilonzo (2018) argue such teachings and values within the Pentecostal context maintain the patriarchal view on the position of women. Secondly, whereas male leadership within this context solely places this role on a man, a woman will follow her husband's instruction and leadership. Van Klinken (2013:126) asserts that it is a man's role to lead, and this role is emphasised in Pentecostal teachings of manhood so that men understand their role in the family and society. This understanding of a man's role of leadership can only fully be realised once a man understands who he is in God (Van Klinken, 2012). Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal leaders such as Joshua Banda and Angus Buchan are of the belief that there is a crisis of leadership.<sup>6-7</sup> To address this crisis, they attempt to remind men of their God-given roles through teachings and encourage them to take up their roles and lead. Lastly, according to Van Klinken (2013), responsibility is the central notion of manhood in the church. He asserts that it is a man's responsibility to lead, provide and protect their families in appropriate ways.

Gabaitse (2020) critiques this model of Pentecostal masculinity by remaining of the view that the discourses in which this masculinity is constructed are the defining characteristics of hegemonic and traditional masculinity. Pentecostal hermeneutics endorse, celebrate and affirm

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<sup>6</sup> Presiding Pastor of Northmead Assemblies of God in Zambia, Lusaka. He did a series on Fatherhood in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, addressing the distortion of manhood in the church and society and how men are not living up to their responsibilities as men.

<sup>7</sup> He is the founder of the Mighty Men Conference. Founded in 2003, the conference teaches men to be leaders, heads, and providers for their families, as these are their God-given roles.  
<https://www.angusbuchan.co.za/mmc>

this masculine discourse in their sermons and messages (Gabaitse, 2020). Chitando and Kilonzo (2018) also point out that the emphasis on the dominant discourse of masculinity in Pentecostalism reinvents patriarchy in the church. But how do men live to up to this standard of masculinity promoted by the church and not be patriarchal at the same time? It leaves Pentecostal men little room to navigate their masculinity both publicly and privately. It fails to critically engage and contextualise social realities when it comes to politics of gender identity, specifically how born-again men navigate their religious identity, and the reconstruction and negotiation of their masculinities within a contemporary society. Furthermore, biblical masculinity as explained by Van Klinken (2013) fails to take into consideration the socio-economic and socio-political factors that impede on a man's ability to be provider for his family.

Regardless of this critique and concern over framing and construction of Pentecostal masculinity, it still has redemptive and transformational aspects. Burchardt (2017) endorses Pentecostal masculinity as a way of resisting and reconstructing hegemonic masculinity. Chitando and Kilonzo (2018) concur that the domestication and non-dominance of men in Pentecostal context is a first step in gender justice and transformation of men in their masculinity reconstruction, as it socialised men anew. Notwithstanding the optimism for Pentecostal masculinity as an alternative masculinity, it has not proven itself to be cut from a different cloth as hegemonic masculinity, it is hegemonic in its own rights within its religious community and those who belief in the Pentecostal doctrine.

The men of God rely on faith-based understanding and models such as biblical masculinity to inform their masculinity construction. The faith-based understanding of masculinity is drenched in patriarchy. Nadar (2009) and Owino (2012;2020; Ngcobo and van der Walt, 2024). In an engagement with Pentecostal media contents, Ngcobo and van der Walt (2024) argues that the perversive discourses of power and dominance in Pentecostal media material put women and other men in vulnerable position of experiencing violence. Dlamini (2023) also concedes that upholding patriarchal ideologies of masculinity within the religious faith landscape, entrancing the biblical norms of manhood perpetuate violence against women.

Religion is complicit to violence against women and these so-called men of God are at the centre of violence. Phiri (2001) with women in Christian homes, whose husbands were faith leaders shows that violence against women was facilitated by patriarchal beliefs of male leadership and female submission. Dlamini (2023) argues that the theology of submission

preached in religious spaces continually put women at risk of experiencing violence and is often excused by their inability to submit to their husbands.

Pentecostalism, through its transformative and redemptive contours seem to offer an alternative from of masculinity that is life-giving and positive, it is still framed within the heteropatriarchal system. Gabaitse (2020) argues that though Pentecostal masculinity seems to foster a redeemed masculinity identity, they systematic in which this is frame is problematic. Chitando and Kilonzo (2018) assert that Pentecostalism has redeeming qualities that facilitate the transformation process of men. This is the bases of the development of redemptive masculinity theory. However, Chitando and colleagues fail to address the impact of patriarchy in this transformation process. The vision for a transformed and redeemed masculine identity is there but it is trapped within the heteropatriarchal system. Considering the systematic that informs masculinity construction in the religious landscape, Pentecostalism does not free men from violence, the only alternative in which men can be free is them giving up their patriarchal privilege and queering hegemonic masculinity.

Undoubtedly, religious masculinity is often palatable, disguised as benevolent leadership or servant headship (Dube, 2012), which masks its patriarchal underpinnings. Nadar (2009) argues that such constructions of masculinity are particularly insidious because they appear less harmful, yet they continue to reinforce structural gender inequality. Men are conditioned to adopt these acceptable forms of patriarchy, which are framed as moral responsibilities rather than expressions of dominance.

The burden placed on men within this model includes not only being the provider and sole decision-maker but also upholding the moral and spiritual integrity of the family (van Klinken, 2013). These expectations can be psychologically burdensome and socially restrictive, especially for men who do not conform to heteronormative or patriarchal ideals. Still, many men are reluctant to challenge this model, as it offers them tangible and symbolic benefits in the form of social respect, authority, and privilege.

This raises the critical question: are men able or willing to break free from the systems that have historically shaped and benefited them? Chitando (2007) concedes that meaningful transformation can only occur when men are willing to forgo their patriarchal privileges and dividends. This is a difficult process, as it requires not only systematic deconstruction that inform men's identity construction, but also a reconfiguration of personal identity and social positioning.

It cannot be disputed that dominant discourse of masculinity and the upholding of patriarchal notions of masculinity within the Pentecostal context (Nada, 2009; Dlamini, 2023) inform male dominance and superiority, which when questioned by their partners may lead to violence. The notion that Pentecostalism provides an alternative masculinity is commendable and have been proven to be effective in transforming men's the toxic attributes and behaviours of masculinity. However, the level of violence perpetuated against women by the so called "men of God" troubles this alternative masculinity and questions whether Pentecostalism frees men from violence as masculine performance and the relationship between Pentecostalism and masculinity. "Man of God" is a term attributed or associated with pastor and prophets within the Pentecostal movement and are believed to be associated with sacred power and authority and have special access to God (Kgatle, 2019). They have been in the forefront as perpetrators of sexual violence against their congregants and women continue be victims of such violence because of their vulnerability when approaching the pastor for some kind of assistance (Mapuranga, 2021). Mzondi (2024) further argues that man of God have used their positionality to prey on the vulnerabilities of women who come for consultations regarding a specific issue ranging from marital troubles, infertility and spiritual guidance.

#### **2.4.1 Pentecostal appropriation of mass media**

Religion has also become a key player in the mediated space, using this platform for a variety of reasons ranging from evangelism, advertising and communication, and as an engagement platform with their audience (Kalu, 2008). According to Kula (2008), Pentecostalism has utilised the media as a medium of enforcing the message and their vision, and to reach greater masses. Furthermore, the use of media shapes and influences people's attitudes towards religious practices and beliefs. For example, Kalu (2008) asserts that seeing is believing, arguing that the use of promotional material such as posters is designed to appeal to an audience that understands the logic or meaning behind that image. These images influence how reality is constructed and should be imagined.

Traditionally, religion has used traditional media platforms such as radio and television in spreading the Gospel and advertising upcoming events. According to Hjarvard (2011:124), the media is an important source of information about religious issues, information, and personal religious experiences. White (2016) asserts that the media has given rise to mass media use for evangelism purpose. Television specifically is used as a marketing and promotional tool for the church and televangelist (White, 2016). Using different types of media, Pentecostalism has

been considered a travelling religion facilitated by use of print and electronic media (Togarasei, 2012). She argues that all media forms are useful in the propagation of the gospel. The increasing demand of life, people constantly being on the move, and the introduction of smart phones forced the church to revise their strategies of reaching out to people – social media became that tool (Ukah 2008; Kgatle, 2016). In exploring how media influences the process of masculinity construction through mediated representations that somewhat contradict those of Pentecostal masculine norms and the dominant constructions of masculinity, the following section engages the intersection of traditional notions of masculinity, Pentecostal notions of masculinity, and how media influences the masculine construction process.

## **2.5 Media representation of masculinity**

We live in a media-saturated contemporary society where our realities and fantasies are often represented through media, be it traditional media, social networking sites or print media. These images and content are produced with an intent of communicating the well-packaged message regarding masculinity and femininity and our social realities. Morgan (2014) asserts that images are agents of change and influence how we construct our identities and realities. It is therefore important that we understand the impact, influence, and implications of media in the process of constructing gendered identities and how we navigate this world as gendered beings.

According to Ria (2021:1) media refers to a traditional mass communication system and content generators as well as other technologies for mediated human speech. For the context of this study, media is used to establish the contact point in media in its different modes. The use of different modes of media and example such as men's lifestyle magazines and their representations of hypermasculinity, the contested space of social media where men choose their self-representation and how these contact points influence their masculinity construction process. In this section, the role of media and its influence is explored by engaging different modes of media that interact with masculinity and the types of representations that are offered by media.

This section discusses the gendered representation of masculinity in media. It particularly focuses on advertising in lifestyle magazines and the lenses through which this representation is portrayed. It critically discusses the promotion of one masculine ideal, which is not a reality for some men. It also looks at new media as a form of self-representation and how men reproduce and represent their masculine bodies using platforms such as Instagram and

Facebook. Finally, it discusses the implications of these representations, the excluded bodies, what this means for them, and how men relate and negotiate their masculine identities against these images.

### **2.5.1 Popular culture artefacts and masculinity**

This section discusses popular culture as a field of the study and how it influences masculine identity construction in the mediated space. I begin by first defining popular culture and the different artefacts that make up popular culture. I will then discuss how masculinity is negotiated and constructed in social networking sites under “networked masculinities”.

Luyt (2008) asserts that popular culture is a concept of which the meaning has never been agreed upon. He reaches this conclusion because it has always been denied in contrast with other conceptual categories such as high culture, folk culture, and mass culture (Luyt, 2008:3). Regardless of the difficulty in defining popular culture, scholars (Fikse, 2010; Storey, 2018) have developed a working definition to simplify what popular culture is and how it is created among the people. According to Fikse (2010), popular culture is an active process of generating and circulating meaning and satisfaction within a social system. Storey (2018:5) simplifies Fikse’s (2010) definition by asserting that popular culture is a culture that is favoured by the people.

Popular culture is derived from what Luyt (2008) and Fikse (2010) consider as mass culture. Mass culture is defined as a cultural system of commercially produced and marketed entertainment and commodities that are offered to the mass population (Luyt, 2008:11). Commodities are economically driven products that are consumed by consumers, ranging from music and clothing to magazines, etc. (Fikse, 2010). These commodities are created by high culture and folk culture, and these cultures are in turn created for and by elite communities. Because these commodities are usually in a form of entertainment, people expropriate this process by making their own culture out of these resources and commodities produced by dominant systems (Fikse, 2010). Therefore, popular culture is made by the people and for the people – it is not imposed, and it appeals to people’s lived realities and what they have in common (Storey, 2018). Storey (2018) further asserts that popular culture is what people make from products of the culture industry. It is for this reason that Fikse (2010) asserts that there is a need to explore and understand the relationship between popular culture and commodities that are consumed by ordinary individuals in their everyday life.

In exploring this relationship, McCandless and Elias (2021) assert that popular culture uses multiple artefacts to communicate with its consumers. These include lifestyle magazines, television, music, film, and social networking sites. In the scholarship of men and masculinities, scholars (Lewington et al., 2018; Reneses & Bosch, 2021; Gurkan & Sertass, 2023) have explored the relationship between the consumption of mediated images in men's lifestyle magazines, social networking sites, television and film; how these influence masculinity construction, and how men navigate their own masculinities against this representation.

### **2.5.2 Popular culture and gendered images of masculinity**

Jeniffer Lemon (2010) in her article titled "Popular Culture and the Crisis of Masculinity", makes the argument that media is an important site for the perpetuation of dominant ideologies, and plays a central role in the social and ideological construction of individuals as gendered beings through images. She further asserts that because gender is a social construct, the gendered images in popular culture become texts on how gender should be performed and enacted (Lemon, 2010). Van der Watt and Louw (2016) also concede that we cannot underestimate the significance of media presence in our lives because we live in a media-saturated contemporary society. Mass media, according to Van der Watt and Louw (2016), provides different representations of what it means to be male or female, shaping our views on gendered identities and speaking to deep social beliefs. As texts, these popular culture images of gender influence socio-cultural scripts of what it means to be masculine and feminine within a particular context (Milani & Shaikjee, 2013).

Masculinity and femininity are culturally determined and socially constructed identities that refer to the pattern of behaviours associated with being male and female (Popa & Gavriliu, 2015). Parkins and Parkins (2020) assert that as gendered concepts, individuals are socialised into these identities through cultural norms and beliefs. Popular culture has also become a tool in which individuals are re-socialised into these gender identities. In its construction of gendered identities, popular culture does not come up with these ideals of what masculinity and femininity is – it grows from the already existing norms in society. Van der Watt and Louw (2016) argue that popular culture plays off the dominant construction of gender in society and conveys these gendered ideologies through mediated images which often convey a particular message about gender. For example, men's lifestyle magazines connote that men must be muscular and have a perfectly shaped masculine body to successfully achieve their masculine

status (Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019). Therefore, the mass media narrative of gender feeds on the socio-culturally defined gendered identities. Through representations of gender, popular culture invites both men and women to recognise themselves in these masculine and feminine roles (Lemon, 2010). As artefacts of popular culture, lifestyle magazines and social networking sites will be engaged to explore how masculinity is represented in mediated space, and how men represent, reconstruct and negotiate their masculine identities in mass media.

### **2.5.3 Masculinity representation in lifestyle magazines**

As a tool of passing on and communicating information, media provides pleasures to its different consumers while also imparting messages as it relates to our gendered beings and sexual identities (Dunlop & Johnson, 2013). According to Togarasei (2012), mass media creates a fantasy world which some have considered to be real. Media potentially throws people away from their reality. Mass media encompasses different forms such as print media, internet, advertising, traditional media (television and radio) and social media, which is a new media. White, Tella and Ampofo (2016) assert that social media has introduced a new reality where individuals create their own realities, compared to other forms of media, which present them with already packaged realities.

Men's lifestyle magazines are magazines that primarily market and advertise products tailored for men (Tan, Shaw, Cheng & Kim, 2013). These include *Men's Health* and *GQ* magazines, whose main consumers are men. These magazines are an important medium in which dominant socio-cultural expectations of manhood are constructed (Lewington, Sebar & Lee, 2018). Through advertising, these magazines portray visuals that evoke emotions; they draw us in and persuade us to act (Mishra, 2021). According to Mishra (2021), these visuals not only provide us with objects of reality and stimulations for our dreams and fantasies, but through repetition, they also become part of our consciousness, imagination, and culture. Giaccardi et al. (2016) concur with Mishra (2021) by asserting that mainstream media is a powerful communicator of cultural norms and values that define and legitimise social order. These visuals also play a role in shaping gendered identities while reinforcing gender hierarchy and norms. Popa and Gavriliu (2015) assert that the way in which gender is represented in media influences how individuals and societies perceive gendered identities and roles. The representation of identity determines how individuals perceive gender and respond to gender performance, based on how they relate to the visuals or images they see (Brooks & Hébert, 2006: 299). Furthermore, these gendered

images reflect the way men and women view themselves and how others perceive them (Brooks & Hébert, 2006).

Femininity and masculinity are culturally and socially constructed gendered identities that refer to patterns of behaviour that are associated with being female and male (Connell, 2005; Thatcher, 2011; Popa & Gavrilu, 2015). Masculinity as a male gender identity is represented through hegemonic notions of masculinity in lifestyle magazines. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) define hegemonic masculinity as the embodiment of traditional and stereotypical masculine norms and values. It is enacted through characteristics such as aggression, power, dominance, risk-taking and heterosexuality (Giaccardi et al., 2016). Waling (2017) asserts that men's lifestyle magazines guide men on how to achieve hegemonic masculinity. It does so through the commercialisation of the ideal masculine identity that men should aspire to and puts pressure on men to embody this ideal (Waling, 2017). This portrayal of masculinity has made men more self-conscious about their bodies and appearance, and how they relate to their bodies (Tan et al., 2013:237).

In a study investigating how adverts and men's lifestyle magazines influence masculinity construction across cultures, Tan et al. (2013:231) identify three types of masculine identities represented in media. Firstly, masculinity as vigorous and macho: the use of a model who is physically muscular and has a determined expression. Connell (2005) argues that masculinity is produced from the body, the body being a landscape in which social symbolism of masculinity is imprinted. It portrays the idealised masculine body that men should aspire to. Marshall, Chamberlain, and Hodgetts (2020) assert that men turn to bodybuilding as a way of negotiating their masculinity and subscribing to hegemonic masculinity by transforming their bodies to match this macho ideal in the magazines. Secondly, masculinity is represented as refined and sophisticated, displaying a well-presented gentleman who is cultured and well groomed. This speaks to how men should look and present themselves. Waling (2017) notes that this representation speaks to what he calls aspirational masculinity. Aspirational masculinity focuses on vision and ambition regarding masculinity. Lastly, masculinity is represented as trendy and cool. This speaks to a modern man who does not necessarily embody hegemonic masculinity but reinforces hegemony in a subtler manner (Tan et al., 2013; Marshall et al., 2021). Therefore, men cannot escape hegemonic masculinity because this representation of masculinity is framed through culturally and socially acceptable ways of performing masculinity.

According to Waling (2017), images provide a shared symbolic language for practices of masculine characteristics, thus they become effective tools for communicating masculine ideals and gender discourses. As argued by Mishra (2021), visuals are memorable and embedded in our subconscious. The image of the male body as represented in these men's lifestyle magazines remind men of who they should become. Through men's lifestyle magazines, advertising companies have created a consumer base masculinity and given rise to branded masculinity. Branded masculinity is created by corporates to generate insecurity about one's body and then offering a solution through presenting a corporate branded masculine body. These include the *Men's Health* and *GQ* magazines (Tan et al., 2013).<sup>8-9</sup> (Tan et al., 2013), Schroeder and Zwick (2004) view these visual representations of masculinity as playing an important role in prescribing sexual identities and promoting gender roles, and they dictate how men should construct, maintain and represent their masculinity. They argue that magazines such as *Men's Health* and *GQ* encourage men to view their bodies as sites of identity management and as a product of labour. The use of muscular models whose bodies are perfectly toned encourages consumers not only to aspire to this body ideal, but to also put in the hard work to attain that body.



Figure 1: Men's Health Magazine



Figure 2: GQ Magazine

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/CbkUpySM02H/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/Ccn6MZ8sEmf/>

These commodified images of masculinity are exported and consumed cross-culturally (Tan et al., 2013). It has been argued that depiction or representation of masculinity is often within the bounds of hegemonic masculinity (Giaccardi et al., 2016; Waling, 2017). These two magazine covers depict two hegemonic masculinity types as identified by Tan et al. (2013). Figure 1 depicts masculinity as vigorous and macho with a muscular and perfectly shaped masculine body, while Figure 2 represents masculinity in a refined and sophisticated manner. These representations of masculinity pressure men to achieve this masculine ideal. Waling (2017) argues that achieving an appropriate masculine body is another form of pressure placed on men through these representations. He further argues that *Men's Health* magazine portrays male bodies as representations of good health and indicates that men need to do intense workouts to achieve this branded masculine ideal (Waling, 2017). These bodies convince overweight men that they are “unhealthy”, thus perpetuating that they must aspire to the construction and embodiment of hyper-masculinity. Micheals, Paratt and Moradi (2013) argue that these “ideal bodies” are misaligned with the average man’s body and may have a negative impact on body image for some men.

Micheals et al. (2013) assert that media portrayals of ideal bodies for men have become increasingly larger and more muscular than a regular man. These body images have the capacity to trigger body dissatisfaction for men, which can cause both psychological and physical effects (Allen & Mulgrew, 2020). In a study investigating how the media impacts the male body and the construction of an ideal masculine body, it was found that men felt more masculine when their bodies were muscular and toned, making them more attractive to the opposite sex. Baker et al. (2015) assert that men constructed their bodies and masculinities based on the representations endorsed by the media. Psychologically, the body ideal excludes a regular man because his body is not well-poised, muscular, and well-toned (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004), which could possibly lead to bodily dissatisfaction (Baker et al., 2015). Physically, this body ideal also excludes a regular man because his “unhealthy” body is deemed to be unattractive to women, therefore he must “hit the gym” and put in the hard labour to achieve this masculine ideal. These representations of an ideal masculine body also perpetuate hyper-masculinity embodiment and construction.

According to Vokey, Tefft and Tysiaczny (2013:562), hyper-masculinity is an extreme form of masculine gender ideology, which is comprised of different clusters of beliefs. The masculine gender ideology consists of men’s avoidance of feminine pursuits, instead pursuing wealth, fame, and status (Corprew, Matthews & Mitchell, 2014). There are different definitions

and understandings of what hyper-masculinity is. Vokey et al. (2013:562) define hyper-masculinity as an extreme form of masculine gender ideology, which is comprised of beliefs such as toughness, violence and danger. Corprew and colleagues further expand on this definition by defining hyper-masculinity as an inflation of stereotypical masculine attitudes and behaviours that involve insensitive attitudes towards women, and beliefs that violence is manly and danger is exciting (Corprew et al., 2014:106). This masculine gender ideology outlines how masculinity should be performed, indirectly dictating what a masculine body should look like.

Research in understanding how masculinity is represented, constructed, and negotiated in men's lifestyle magazines and adverts is predominantly represented through four discourses of masculinity (Vokey et al., 2013; Corprew et al., 2014; Lewington et al., 2018). Firstly, insensitive belief towards women and sex. In their study that evaluated varied adoptions of hyper-masculine attitudes among young men, Corprew et al. (2014) found that women were considered ornamental and used for the purpose of subordination. It perpetuates the belief that women can be used for sexual pleasure and as a source of male power and dominance (Vokey et al., 2013). Secondly, masculinity represented as violent speaks to the belief that violent aggression is an acceptable expression of masculine power, and that violence is manly (Mathews, Jewkes & Abrahams, 2011; Corprew et al., 2014). Thirdly, masculinity represented through toughness, macho and muscular physique. Lewington et al. (2018) assert that articles and adverts in men's lifestyle magazines feature articles suggesting that men must achieve a lean and fit physique. Often this muscular physique is aligned with toughness and lack of emotion, suggesting that vulnerability is a weakness (Giaccardi et al., 2013). Lastly, masculinity as dangerous or risk taking, believing that survival in dangerous situations is manly, and that living on the edge and taking risks is part of masculine identity (Vokey et al., 2013).

These dominant representations of hyper-masculinity in men's lifestyle magazines and adverts do not come from a vacuum. Scholars (Vokey et al., 2013; Corprew et al., 2014; Lewington et al., 2018) argue that magazines do not necessarily represent men as they are, but they use socially desirable versions/norms of masculinity to infuse these characteristics into their adverts to sell a product. Vokey and colleagues argue that advertisers use hegemonic masculinity as a lens to represent masculinity in their products to enhance appearance. They pair products with powerful, hyper-muscular and tough male models, sending a message that by consuming/buying these products masculinity is enhanced (Vokey et al., 2013:571).

Lewington et al. (2018) further argue that the display of masculinity and constriction of masculinity through a muscular body represents a socio-culturally acceptable masculine body image. These representations of masculinity do not represent every man in society.

Stella Viljoen and Lindsay Clowes' engagement with masculinity representation in lifestyle magazines such as *Men's Health*, *GQ* and *Drum* highlights the lack of representation of an ordinary man in these magazines. Clowes (2005) asserts that masculinity and manhood presentation in early *Drum* magazine was achieved through the social recognition of their roles as fathers, sons, uncles, husbands, and grandfathers. In her analysis of this representation, she posits that men were the main target market as working class and had a few rands they could splurge, therefore providing content that they could relate to was important for *Drum* magazine. Men were the main writers for this magazine and produced stories and narratives that spoke to the working-class man, working to provide for his family. The introduction of "glossy" magazines, as Stella Viljoen would call them, challenged the projector in which we view masculinity and manhood to be within the South African context. She argues that the socio-economic shifts in a new democracy made mainstream media fertile ground for imaging a variety of masculine images (Viljoen, 2013). She further notes that these magazines provided and maintained a globalised image and a masculine ideal that excludes majority of South Africa men. They omit the very real challenges of being a man in post-apartheid South Africa such as unemployment, issues of fatherhood and the daily struggle of some men having to provide for their children through maintenance court, etc. The working-class man is not interested in maintaining a healthy body, nor occupied with building a muscular body as presented in these lifestyle magazines. Yet, the consumption of these muscular images has put men in a conflicting position to be satisfied with their masculinity or aspire to be the man that they have always wanted to be – muscular, healthy and hypersexual (Corprew et al., 2014; Waling, 2017). It begs the question as to how men navigate and make meaning of their masculine identities against these mediated representations of masculinities, and the extent to which media influences their process of masculinity construction.

Representation of hyper-masculinity as violent has been argued to be problematic within a larger frame of gender studies. In their study investigating hyper-masculinity in magazine adverts, Vokey et al. (2013) argue that this gender ideology is more likely to be performed during the adolescent and young adulthood stages where peer group support for hyper-masculinity is already high. They argue that the enactment of hyper-masculinity is more about conforming to social expectation of masculinity and wanting to be included. These findings are

similar to Corprew et al.'s (2014) findings in their analysis of hyper-masculinity, by further arguing that men who embody this masculine ideology tend to be more violent towards women and towards men who violate gender roles. These masculine ideals are part of a larger agenda of mass media in which masculine bodies are commodified and commercialised to generate profit at the risk of exaggerating and perpetuating this male stereotype (Siddhanta and Singh 2015). Psychologically, these representations of the masculine body have negative consequences on men's self-esteem and lack representation/exclusion of some male bodies. As part of mass media, popular culture has also influenced how masculinity is represented and negotiated within the social media space.

#### **2.5.4 Networked masculinities**

With the growing access to digital technology, social networking sites (SNS) have become a space where men negotiate and express their masculinities (Reneses & Bosch, 2022). According to Luyt (2013:247), social networking sites are sites that individuals use to communicate and connect with others digitally or online. SNS have been theorised as online public networks on which users reflect, reconstruct and redistribute shared culture and knowledge through discourse of social exchange (Reneses, 2021). These sites include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Internet, and WhatsApp, and are commonly referred to as social media. Social media plays an essential role in how young men come to understand what it means to be a man. Reneses and Bosch (2022) also concede that social media has become a tool not only for young men to express themselves but to also engage in social issues and online debates. They can also structure how we conceptualise and embody our identities. These networks provide an opportunity for young men to construct, negotiate and reconstruct their masculinity within any given context (Manago, 2013).

Within the SNS platforms, individuals present and display different constructions of identities through the process of self-representation. Siibak (2010:244) defines this process as a process where individuals present themselves in a manner that highlights characteristics of themselves that correspond with norms and ideals of the particular online community that they are part of. Mashall, Chamberlain and Hodgetts (2020) assert that self-representation allows individuals to display idealised versions of themselves and their bodies through carefully staged communication and photographs. In his study investigating masculinity construction in SNS, Siibak (2010) argues that this is a space where multiple masculinities exist, are reproduced and

reconstructed. Through carefully curated online profiles, users express themselves through works and photographs.

As networked platforms, Instagram and Twitter are popular among young people and used for different purposes. In a collage of photographs, videos, reels and hashtags, Instagram is a popular platform for self-representation (Parikadyanto et al., 2021). This is an online network that an individual is part of and can comment and like photographs and videos posted on the page. Twitter, on the other hand, is a popular network for controversy and online debates about a particular social issue promoted by #hashtags. In a study investigating the fictional #MensConference, Reneses and Bosch (2022) explored the role of Twitter in the performance, policing and negotiating hegemonic masculinity among male users. #MensConference is a fictional conference conceptualised by the boycotting of romantic gestures and rituals related to Valentine's Day (Reneses & Bosch, 2022:4). Their findings indicate that men co-construct and reproduce masculinity through discursive interactions with each other. Siibak (2010:253) and Trott (2022) refer to this process as networking masculinity, defined as those masculinities that are co-produced and reproduced in conjunction with digitally mediated networked public spaces.

Reneses and Bosch's (2022) study findings highlight discursive themes that were dominant in the hashtag thread, asserting power and dominance and reasserting hegemonic masculinity. Under the first theme, they found that men were appraised for cheating on their partner and having multiple sexual partners, and patriarchal power related to this theme was evident in these responses. This speaks to the dominant notion of masculinity in which men perceive having multiple sexual partners as successful masculinity (Ragnarsson, Townsend, Ekström, Chopra & Thorson, 2010; Stern & Buikema, 2013). In their characterisation of hyper-masculinity, Vokey et al. (2013) believe that the insensitive attitudes towards sex and women's bodies such as these, perpetuate toxic masculinities. Feminist theorist McPhail (2016) notes that appraisals of hegemonic masculinity perpetuate sexual violence as means of asserting power and dominance. The second theme highlighted how some users rejected the conception of the conference and resisted hegemonic masculinity. The reason for this rejection is that some men felt that the conference did not focus on issues such as gender-based violence and other social ills caused by men (Reneses & Bosch, 2022).

A similar study exploring how masculinity is co-produced, reproduced, and negotiated in the "Gillette: The Best Beta Can Get" advert post the #MeToomovemet, also found that men

defended their hegemonic masculine ideals in the digital space (Trott, 2022). Trott (2022) argues that in the context where men already feel like their masculinity is being attacked, they will protect their masculine ideal. Therefore, such networked masculinities construct and operate to reinforce hegemonic masculinities online (Trott, 2022) through their discursive interactions with each other (Reneses, 2021). Both these studies highlight the contestation of masculinities and the different ideas of what constitutes a real man. This study unpacks how men negotiate and make sense of their masculinities in a landscape filled with different and competing ideals of masculinity.

Reneses (2021) asserts that because of the contestation of masculinities online, networked masculinities give life to a manosphere and fosters networked misogyny. The manosphere is social networking sites where men, who believe that feminism has emasculated them, are able to reinforce their hegemonic ideals through networked masculinities (Trott, 2022). These detached sets of websites and social media pages are united by the belief that men are oppressed and victims of feminism (Dickel & Evolvi, 2023). It has been argued that the manosphere perpetuates misogynistic narratives online and that the commentary in these groups highlight masculinity narratives that are embedded in patriarchal narratives that have been normalised in society (Dickel & Evolvi, 2023). The danger of networked masculinities is the unintended implication of perpetuating toxic masculinity in the name of defending masculinities and affirming hegemonic masculinity.

Scholars (Reneses, 2021; Trott, 2022) acknowledge the role of SNS in the construction and negotiation of masculinities. These constructions are informed by religion and culture, both of which are then performed by men in these spaces. SNS and men's lifestyle magazines offer a space where masculinities contest for hegemony. Connell's (1995) explanation of the hegemonic masculinity concept is instrumental in understanding not only the dynamics of hegemony in institutions such as religion and culture, but also how popular culture offers its consumers to accept, reject or desire a certain masculine ideal that is part of their online community. In their book *Does God Make a Man: Media Religion and the Crisis of Masculinity*, Hoover and Coats (2012) highlight that Protestant Christian men rejected the ideal of hegemonic norms of masculinity portrayed in some television programmes such as *Two and Half Men*. This show was rejected on the ideal that it promoted promiscuity for men and made it seem cool to have multiple sexual partners. They argue that religion often conflicts with mediated images of masculinity, speaking to the crisis of masculinity that scholars (Morrell, 2001; Xaba, 2001; Lemon, 2010; Owino, 2012) have argued is a result of the constantly

changing society, and men having to reconstruct and renegotiate their masculinity. In his engagement with Twitter (SNS), Reneses (2021) explores how hegemonic masculinity is contested, reconstructed, affirmed, and rejected under the #MensConference in South Africa. He highlights that men affirm each other's masculinity in this space, but that some men also call out toxic hegemonic masculinity behaviour. Furthermore, those men who feel emasculated in such spaces believe that it is their right to defend hegemonic masculinity, arguing that this is part of the feminist agenda and have thus created the manosphere, where they reinforce hegemonic masculinity (Dickel & Evolvi, 2023).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the foundational work that informs this study and themes: Men, masculinity and religion; African Pentecostalism and Pentecostal masculinity; and Media representation of masculinity. These themes were explored and critically engaged in accordance with the study's aims and objectives. The scholarship of masculinity is an interdisciplinary field where scholars (Connell, 1995; Morrell, 2001; Jewkes et al., 2011; Ratele, 2014) have engaged with the concept to better understand how men construct their identities and negotiate their masculinity and need for power and control as dominant gender. Masculinity is a collective male gender identity that is socially constructed and fluid (Morrell, 2001). Mensah (2021) defines masculinity as attributes, behaviours, social roles and qualities that are regarded as characteristics of boys and men. It is also contextual and contested. Connell (1995) provides four strategies that can be used to define and understand the concept of masculinity: essentialist, positivist, normative and semiotic.

Furthermore, multiple masculinities exist in one context. These masculinities do not enjoy or yield the same power. Connell (1995) provides and outline four categories of masculinity: hegemony, complicit and subordinate/ protest. Messerschmidt (2019) introduces a fifth category, protest masculinity, that exists within contemporary society. In essence, there are five categories of masculinity that exist in any given society. Hegemonic masculinity, according to Connell (1995:77), refers to the cultural dynamics by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life. It has also been defined as a configuration of gender practice which embodies the culturally accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees male dominance and the subordination of women and other men (Messerschmidt, 2019). The concept of hegemonic masculinity has been used to theorise and understand masculinity globally. It has been used to understand intimate partner violence and

sexual abuse (Jewkes et al., 2011), the need for men to have power and control (Morrell et al., 2012; Jewkes & Morrell, 2018); the social construction of gender and gender power (Connell, 2002), and the perpetuation of gendered pandemics within the public health systems. As a concept, it has been instrumental in laying the foundational for theoretical work on men and masculinities. However, there is a growing call to analyse existing masculinities at local, regional and global level. This exercise considers the micro-level processes that function in a man's life (Luyt, 2012).

This analysis enables researchers to contextually theorise masculinity and understand it as experienced by men within their context. The post-colonial perspective is one of the tools that is used in this analysis and to study men in third-world countries such as South Africa. Morrell and Swart (2005) and Ratele (2014) assert that complex issues such as poverty, unemployment, politics, gender, and race cannot be ignored in the understanding of the process of masculinity construction among men in this context. The changing landscape that men found themselves in forced them to reconstruct and renegotiate their masculinities. Xaba (2001) engages with struggle masculinities which were dominant and celebrated during the apartheid era, but they have no place in society today. Langa and Kiguwa (2013) argue that these masculinities are now protesting the hegemonic masculinity within the local context, challenging the systematic injustice imposed by the very system they fought for. The scholarship of critical men and masculinities have the tendency of naming a particular type of masculinity based on the lived experiences of the masculine subjects and the context in which these masculinities are studied (Morrell et al., 2012; Langa, 2020; Pyke, 2020, Ratele, 2014). These masculinities, constructed and informed by men's lived experiences and societal norms are different from each other and do not enjoy the same power and privilege that comes with a hegemonic masculine identity. Furthermore, the constant masculine renegotiation in this context is an indication of an unstable, fragile hegemonic masculinity that is constantly changing, and is being deconstructed.

Ezra Chitando and Adriaan Van Klinken have somewhat informed the study of men, masculinity, and religion in the African context, specifically focusing on Pentecostalism as a religious movement. Pentecostalism is a branch of Christianity that emphasises the apostolic pneumatological experiences such as divine healing, prophesy and speaking in tongues (Mofokeng & Modise, 2019). As a branch of Christianity, it was introduced to the African context through missionary work, which was met with resistance because it was perceived to be part of the colonial projects. Kaunda and John (2020) define African Pentecostalism as

Pentecostal and Charismatic Christian experiences and expressions of faith within in Africa. There are four waves of African Pentecostalism: Classical, Charismatic, Neo-Pentecostal and Prophetism (Kaunda, 2016; Kgatle, 2017). The Holy Spirit baptism and conversion are essential characteristics for Pentecostalism. The conversion experience is popularly referred to as a doctrine of rebirth or being born again. Manglos (2010) asserts that born-againism implies a radical change in behaviour and religiosity. Being born again means one has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and must change from their old behaviour, accepting a new way of life through Christ. For men, however, this means giving up their hegemonic norms of masculinity such womanising, alcoholism, multiple sexual partners, and toxic behaviour (Lindhardt, 2015). Lindhardt (2015) further argues that being born again implies that men must turn away from their public sphere where masculinities are traditionally constructed and move toward their private sphere where they are committed to the traditional ideal of family and their role of breadwinner. There is contention between the private and public sphere because regardless of how or where a man performs his masculinity, he must live up to the patriarchal ideologies of masculinity. Failing to live up to these norms and standards, one is considered not man enough. Pentecostalism encourages men to do everything in their power to live up to these expectations. These expectations create the church's ideal of what masculinity should look like: men must now construct new masculinities according to their faith traditions and against hegemonic masculinity (Lindhardt, 2015). Informed by both culture and religion, masculinity has been represented in media through hegemonic norms of masculinity.

According to Morgan (2014), images are agents of change and influence how we construct gendered identities. Informed by social norms, these gendered representations reflect on how we perform our identities. Media provides us with different representations of masculinity using different platforms. As artefacts of popular culture, men's lifestyle magazines and SNS have been used by advertisers to promote a certain type of masculine male body (Tan et al., 2013). Schroeder and Zwick (2004) assert that these visual representations of masculinity play an important role in prescribing sexual identities and the promotion of gender roles and dictate how men should construct, maintain, and represent their masculinity. Men's lifestyle magazines such as *Men's Health* and *GQ* encourage men to view their bodies as sites of identity management and as products of labour. Vokey et al. (2013) argue that these representations construct and perpetuate hyper-masculinity, which is an exaggerated form of masculinity that is promoted or perpetuated by the masculine ideology. It has been argued that such an ideology perpetuates violence as innate in man, which becomes a defining characteristic of masculinity

and perpetuates the stereotypical masculine identity characterised by aggression, violence, and dominance (Jewkes et al., 2011; Tan et al., 2013; Vokey et al., 2013). These mediated images of hyper-masculinity exclude certain bodies that are not lean and muscular and do not fit into the idealised hegemonic masculine image globally. Psychologically, these representations can have negative effects on men's body image and self-esteem in general. Paratt and Moradi (2011) argue that these representations are misaligned with the average man's body. These images have the capacity to trigger body dissatisfaction for men.

Having engaged with the different versions of masculinities, they all appear to aspire to hegemonic masculinity. However, they are stuck within the cis-heteropatriarchal system that dictates the version of masculinity that has dominance that is one dimensional. The problem with viewing, and conceptualizing masculinity in a singular dimension, we are left with no alternative and are stuck with hegemonic masculinity. Looking beyond this current framing of masculinity, I would suggest queering hegemonic masculinity. In this context, it refers to queer as form a systematic resistance to the hegemony that is stuck and to counter the cis-heteronormative hegemonic masculinity. Heasley (2005) defines queer masculinity as a way of being masculine outside of the heteronormative construction of masculinity that disrupts the traditional image of a heterosexual masculinity. He argues that men within a cis-heteropatriarchal norms are presumed to be straight and hold stereotypical beliefs and attitudes. Queer masculinities give space and language to the lived experiences and sets a stage on which narratives of straight queer men can find a home (Heasley, 2005; 312). The creation of this queer space within the narratives of straight men and their lived masculine experiences, we are breaking and challenging the systematic while expanding the ways in which we frame masculinities. Queering masculinities is not about gender bending but it is about disrupting heteronormativity and homophobia (Heasley 2005).

In exploring the intersection of media, religion and culture and its influence in the masculinity construction process, I employ three theoretical frames: African masculinity theory, redemptive masculinity theory and media theory, which is outlined in the next chapter. The preceding chapter also discusses the research methodology used in the design and execution of the research process.

### 3 CHAPTER THREE: THEORY AND METHOD

#### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter surveyed three literature themes: men, masculinity, and religion, African Pentecostalism and born-againism, and media representations of masculinity. Before discussing the content of this chapter, I will reflect on some key insights gained from the literature review. As a male gender identity, masculinity is socially constructed, performed, and embodied through socially accepted norms of masculinity (Morrell, 2001; Ratele, 2010). Within the South African context, the scholarship of masculinity is often complex and constantly developing. Social-historical and political factors such as colonialism and apartheid shaped how black men relate to work and their masculine identities (Xaba, 2001; Langa, 2020; Ratele, 2020). The socio-economic factors that have prevented some men to actively participate in the economy to be able to provide for their families have also influenced how men view themselves against the socially constructed gender role of manhood (Pyke, 2020). This complexity is further perpetuated by religious expectations that men need to live up to. Religion has been a key role player in the masculinity construction process within the African landscape, with scholars (Van Klinken, 2011; Owino, 2012; Chitando, 2013; Meyer, 2017) arguing that religion influences the dominant discourses of what it means to be a man and the expectation that comes with that role. The rebirth/born-again doctrine is fundamental in Pentecostal traditions and faith; believers are expected to adapt this religious identity and give up their old sinful ways, reconstructing their identities not only as men but also as believers (Manglos, 2010; Lindhardt, 2015; Kgatle, 2017; Kaunda & John, 2020). It requires that men construct their masculinity according to its teaching and traditions, which Gabaitse (2020) calls Pentecostal masculinity. Through its indoctrination of beliefs and practices, Pentecostalism creates an image of men and imposes norms of being a man (Chitando & Biri, 2013). However, religion is not the only factor that imposes how men should construct their masculinities. Media representations of masculinity visualise the discursive social norms and provide a concrete idea of what masculinity should look like. Lewington et al. (2018) argue that media is an important medium in which dominant social cultural expectations of masculinity are constructed. Lemon (2010) further argues that media is an important site for the perpetuation of dominant ideologies and, through images, plays an important role in the social and ideological constructions of individuals as gendered beings.

Religion and culture inform masculinity over time, and media provides an avenue in which these masculine ideals are played out and explored through popular culture and traditional media (Wood, 2008). Considering the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa and its utilisation of the media (Ukah, 2008), this study addresses the gap in the intersection of media, religion, and culture in the process of masculinity construction among African born-again men. It explores how born-again men navigate media, culture, and religion in their process of masculinity construction.

In exploring how men construct and negotiate their masculinity, African Masculinity Theory (AMT) was used to engage men from a postcolonial perspective, looking at how the identities of men as gendered beings have been influenced by social-historical, political, socio-economic and structural factors. Being religious, born-again Pentecostal men adapt a religion identity that separates them from hegemonic/traditional norms of masculinity and religio-cultural norms. However, it does not exempt these men from masculinity performance and living up to social expectations of masculinity. To engage with these aspects of masculinity, redemptive masculinity will be used to explore and engage the religio-cultural norms that men need to live up to and how they navigate between traditional norms of masculinity and Pentecostal norms of masculinity. Research has shown that masculinity representation in popular culture/mass media influences how men construct their masculinities (Hoover & Coats, 2011; Vokey et al., 2013). To explore the visual representation of masculinity, how men relate to these representations and how they influence their process of masculinity construction, medial theory will be used to engage the meaning behind the portrayed images.

The second section of this chapter focuses on the methodology which explains the research process that will be used for this study. The research process for this study is influenced by feminist impulse, drawing on the men's narratives and positionality central to the theoretical frame used for the study. My own positionality as a Pentecostal man also influences the research process. As part of ensuring validity and reliability during this process, I will keep a reflection journal and include some of its content in the data representation. The aim of this study is to explore how born-again men navigate media, religion and culture in the process of masculinity construction in Pentecostal faith traditions. It explores the conflict between Pentecostal norms and cultural expectations of manhood, and how born-again Pentecostal men construct and navigate their masculine identity at the backdrop of mass media representation of masculinity and traditional notions of masculinity.

### 3.2 African Masculinity Theory

The critical scholarship on men and masculinities has been theorised using the concept of hegemonic masculinity as proposed by Raewyn Connell. Within the larger masculinity theory, there are categories of masculinities and they do not share the same power: hegemonic, complicit, subordinate and marginalised masculinity (Connell 1995:76-80). Hegemonic masculinity occupies the dominant position and is configured through gender practices that embody the patriarchal framework that generates a dominant position of men and the subordination of women. Subordinate masculinities are constructed as lesser than or deviant to hegemonic masculinity. Complicit masculinity does not embody hegemonic masculinity but enjoys the privileges of the hegemonic masculine system and helps sustain it. Marginalised masculinities are discriminated against based on age, race, and class. Messerschmidt (2019:86) shows how masculinity theory has developed by further broadening the categories of masculinities by including protest masculinities. Protest masculinities are constructed as hyper-masculinities concerning social positioning and political power. This category of masculinity speaks to the contemporary context that we are part of. These concepts are just abstract terms that define gender inequality and which form the basis for conceptualising masculinity (Connell, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2019). In the theorisation of masculinity in this study, I go beyond the abstract idea that has been used to explain men's behaviour and I explore what it means to be a man in the African context to gain perspective as to what drives them to desire such hegemonic power.

Scholars have theorised masculinity as an interdisciplinary field, using hegemonic masculinity concept in the African context (Jewkes et al., 2011; Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012; Morell et al., 2012; Viljoen, 2012; Ratele, 2013, 2014; Langa, 2020), appropriating the concept to theorise and make sense of masculinity. Within gender and health studies, this concept has been used to understand the need for men to have power and control and has also formed the base of masculinity-focused intervention programs and addressing gendered pandemics within the South African context (Jewkes & Morell, 2018). Organisations such as Sonke Gender Justice have created a masculinity-focused gender transformation programme to work with men as a violence-prevention mechanism.<sup>10</sup> This intervention program, however, has not been effective given the rise of gender-based violence cases in the country (Mshweshwe, 2021).

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<sup>10</sup> Sonke is a South African-based non-profit organisation working throughout Africa. The organisation believes women and men, girls and boys can work together to resist patriarchy, advocate for gender justice, and achieve gender transformation. <https://genderjustice.org.za/>

Sakhumzi Mfecane, Kopano Ratele and Gcobani Qambela have argued that the appropriation of hegemonic masculinity concept in these interventions does not consider the historical contexts, the practices and structural factors that shape and influence how men shape their masculinities.

Connell (2007) accuses the global north of neglecting the lived experience of African black men in their theorisation and of adopting a blanket approach in their scholarship of men and masculinities. She argues that northern theories (metropole) have presented themselves as universal knowledge, leaving little room for knowledge production in the global south. There is a growing call to study masculinities in a postcolonial context that considers the historical contexts such as apartheid and colonialism, and how these oppressive structures have influenced men's construction of their identities, and how they negotiated their masculine identities as gendered beings (Ratele, 2014; Morell, 2016).

With growing scholarship of masculinity in the South African context, there is a need for the development of a theoretical frame that studies South African man in their own context. While hegemonic masculinity concept has been central to the theorisation of masculinity, scholars such as Skhumbuzo Mfecane and Kopano Ratele call for African-centred theories of masculinity and invite us to do decoloniality work within the scholarship. As part of decolonising the study of masculinity within third-world or global south countries, Morell and Swart (2005) consider how men and masculinity have been understood and analysed using different theories and suggest that gender conditions in a postcolonial context require a flexible approach to understanding and appreciating the lives of men as gendered beings within this context. In examining how different masculinities are constructed, and how men position themselves and relate to the world, they adopt a postcolonial approach which prompts new ways of examining masculinity that give greater weight to indigenous knowledge systems (Morell & Swart, 2005).<sup>11</sup> This research project approaches masculinity from a postcolonial and pro-feminist perspective, examining men as gendered beings whose process of masculinity concept is influenced by their immediate environments and structural factors such culture, religion, media, and socio-economic status. It specifically focuses on Pentecostal Christian men and how they negotiate and navigate their masculinity within a heteropatriarchal society.

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<sup>11</sup> Post-colonialism refers to the period after colonisation, Morell and Swart, p91. Post-colonial context refers to the Third World/Global South countries such as Latin America, Africa and some parts of Asia, which have gained independence from their colonisers.

It adopts an African masculinity theory which foregrounds the experiences of black African men and how their lived experiences inform their masculinity construction process.

The theorisation of men and masculinities in this project is centred on the global south local knowledge. It draws on the social-historical context that has influenced how men construct and make meaning of their masculinities, and the socio-economical and structural factors that have prevented them from actively participating in the economy. According to Connell (2007), scholars from the south have often appropriated northern theories in their research processes to gain recognition and acceptance.<sup>12</sup> In her theorisation of Southern Theory, she asserts that there is a lot to learn from locally produced knowledge and theory for the global south, as they face different contextual problems. Mfecane (2018) criticises northern theories, arguing that they are based on the phenomena of the North and that they are not applicable for the south because of context. The theorisation of men and masculinities in this project is centred on the global south local knowledge. It draws on the social-historical context that has influenced how men construct and make meaning of their masculinities, and the socio-economical and structural factors that have prevented them from actively participating in the economy.

In her critique of the global north, Connell (2007) uses Southern Theory as a concept to argue for inclusion of indigenous knowledge strategies from the formerly colonised global south. Southern Theory uses knowledge generated in the colonial encounter to reconstruct ideas and practices among the colonised group. She further argues that mainstream knowledge production cannot continue to ignore the conceptual, methodological, and theoretical thinking from the global south (Connell, 2017).

Taking lead from Southern Theory as a concept, there is a need for the development of a theoretical frame that studies men in their own context. Informed by scholars (Mfecane, 2018; Morrell, 2001, 2019; Ratele, 2020), AMT is a developing theoretical framework that studies men in their own contexts. These scholars argue for the need for an African-centred approach that contextually theorises men's lived experiences and what it means to be a man in a postcolonial context. African Masculinity Theory prioritises and acknowledges men as active

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<sup>12</sup> Connell is an Australian sociologist and theorist whose concept of hegemonic masculinity has foreground much of masculinity theory. Her stance on Southern Theory puts her between a rock and a hard place, because she has been part of the global north metropole that has influenced knowledge production in the global south.

gender beings and their positionality as contemporary men in an ever-changing contemporary society (Dery et al., 2021).

Men in Africa – black men – cannot be theorised outside of their lived realities and the structures that influence and shape their masculine identities. Morell and Swart (2005) assert that the masculinity of black men needs to be considered in the conflicting and contradictory sites of black identities and their complex interactions with state institutions and racial ideologies. The notion of what it means to be a man is influenced by colonialisation, marginalisation, class, race, location, unemployment, structural exclusion, cultural practices, traditions, media, and religion (Morrell & Swart, 2005). All these factors in one way or another affect how black men construct their identities and how they relate to the world. In engaging African Masculinity Theory, these factors will be explored to examine how different masculinities are constructed and how men position themselves in the world in a postcolonial context. The role of a man being a provider for his family ultimately distinguishes a “real” man from a man. Religio-cultural norms of masculinity have placed an expectation on men to be providers for their family. Graaff and Heineken (2017) note that the high-income inequality and low economic development negatively impact on how men define their masculinity.

Socio-economic status also influences how men construct their masculinity. Qambela (2021) asserts that conditions of unemployment, economic violence and structural exclusion propel us to investigate what men do under such conditions and how this affects their masculinity conception/constructions. Langa and Kiguwa’s (2013) work on protest masculinities speak to the socio-economic position of men which often prevents them from fulfilling their provider role. The main role of being a man is to be a provider. Dover (2005) in his study on expectation of manliness in Zambia argues that a man is expected to be a provider for all his family needs and his extended family. With the dire unemployment rate and economic disparity, most men cannot work. Therefore, they have failed to meet this expectation and their manhood is questioned. This exclusion as showed by Langa and Kiguwa (2013) leads men to protest hegemonic power not only including, but also as a way of reclaiming their masculine identity as “real” men. The ability for a man to provide is central to how he goes about being a man and who he is as a man. Therefore, Ratele (2020) asserts that non-men concepts open a conversation where contemporary voices engage with issues that prevent them from being seen as “real” men and explore alternative positive ways in which they can perform their masculinity.

Langa and Kiguwa (2013) introduce another masculinity category within the South African context: protest masculinity. Theoretically, this category of masculinity exists in relation to hegemony and protests against structural and systematic factors that exclude certain groups of men. This masculinity can also be attributed to what Xaba (2001) refers to as struggle masculinities. These are men who chose to be part of the struggle against apartheid and used violence to assert their masculinity and fight against the system. Post struggle, these men are finding it difficult to integrate into society because they do not have the critical skills to actively participate in the economy or gain formal employment, because they do not have the qualification and experience required. Some of these men did not finish school as they had to go into exile and flee the country due to the political climate of the country. The scholars highlight the complexities of masculinity within the African context and indicate that masculinity is shaped not only by historical context but also their current lived reality. White men defined their masculinity through economic dominance, African black men defined their masculinity through resistance of white hegemonic power, often referring to the saying *Kubukhunu ukuba yindonda* (Being a man is not easy) (Morell et al., 2012).

According to Ratele (2014), homosexuality troubles the hegemonic African masculinities and the honoured way of being a man because it forces us towards a complex understanding of the constructing and reproduction of dominant forms of masculinity. This status is attained by going through a ritual called *Ulwaluko*, which is a customary rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. After going through the initiation school, the boy becomes a man and is allowed to marry, build a family, and be involved in community rituals (Mfecane, 2016). Qambela (2022) refers to this process as the primary precursor to manhood. The one who undergoes medical circumcision is not considered *Indoda*, nor is he honoured, because he did not go through the customary rite of passage. It begs the question: How does a medically circumcised man negotiate his masculinity within this cultural context? Even if he can provide for his family or be a community leader, etc. he will never be called *Indoda*, and will be marginalised. The AmaZulu as a nation also have their own notions of what it means to be a man. It uses masculine discourses such as *Isoka* and *Umunzane*. *Isoka* refers to a man who is a hit with the ladies and often has multiple sexual partners. *Umunzane* refers to the one who heads the home/homestead, has a family, and provides for the family and extended family's needs (Fouten, Ratele, Shefer & Strebel, 2010). However, these conceptions of masculinities change over time. These changes, amongst other reasons, are informed by the socio-economic status that men find themselves in and changing gender roles.

These factors inform the lived realities of African black men and how they construct their identity. If we are to theorise African masculinity, it cannot be considered or theorised without keeping in mind/considering the historical contexts. Masculinities in Africa are shaped by ideals, practices and collective agents in social, cultural, economic, and political structures (Ammann & Staudacher, 2020). The multiplicity of masculinities that exist within the postcolonial context forces us to theorise African men as multidimensional gendered beings whose masculinity is constructed and shaped by a variety of contextual factors (Morrell & Swart, 2005). Dery et al. (2022) argue that African men ought to be studied and theorised as gendered social subjects within their multiple and often conflicting locatedness. Theories from the North, though having been instrumental in the scholarship of the global South, fail to consider the contextual factors such as history and lived experiences of African men. Theorising men in Africa requires a careful reading of African men and masculinities in a manner that unpacks the tension, complexities, and potential transformation of those masculinities (Dery et al., 2022).

The lives of African men unfold in ways that are more complex than gender frames and require a development of culturally intelligent studies of men and masculinities (Ratele, 2014). Their lives are informed by historical context, cultural diversity, cultural traditions, and structural factors such as unemployment, poverty and inequality. These complex issues cannot be ignored when theorising African men. African masculinity theory (AMT) is located within a postcolonial context that studies men in their context, taking into consideration the intersection of media, culture, religion and colonial history. It theorises men based on their lived experiences as gendered beings. This study uses AMT to contextualise and situate this study within the African context.

The AMT draws on African men's lived realities and their process of masculinity construction, taking into consideration their historical and socio-economic status (Ratele, 2014). Within the African context, masculinity has been theorised taking into consideration the religio-cultural aspects that influence gender construction and how men and women relate to each other (Jewkes & Morrell, 2018). The gendered pandemics in our context have been attributed to traditional and hegemonic notions of masculinity that promote the dominance of man while oppressing women and stripping them of their agency (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012). AMT takes into consideration the complex life experiences of African men, ranging from issues of fatherhood, post-colonial masculine identities, media and religion, and the immediate environment that shapes masculinities (Ratele, Shafer & Botha, 2011; Ratele, 2016; Mfecane,

2018). As a framework, it will be used to explore the complexities of masculinity construction and negotiations among African men within the Pentecostal faith traditions, offering a nuanced understanding of where born-again men situate themselves within the landscape of African masculinity. Social science research has also shown that men are struggling to keep up with the performance of hegemonic masculinity because for many, this ideal is untenable (Langa, 2020; Pyke, 2020). The patriarchal notions that inform hegemonic norms of masculinity have also been proven to be problematic and encouraging of toxic and dangerous masculinities among men, exacerbating the scourge of gendered pandemics such as HIV and AIDS and gender-based violence (Jewkes et al., 2011; Matthews, Jewkes & Abrahams, 2011; Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012). Theological or religious scholarship within the African context has relied on the concept of redemptive masculinity as a resource to construct an alternative to hegemonic masculinity. In also framing this study within the religious landscape as it is located in theology/religion and gender, it is also important to keep in mind men go through a similar process of masculinity construction regardless of one's religious identity. The following section discusses the redemptive masculinity theory to understand how born-again construct their religious masculine identity.

### **3.3 Redemptive masculinity**

Within the broader horizons of AMT, redemptive masculinity concept functions as a religious-cultural or theological resource that has been used to explore the contours of redeeming, transforming and liberating masculinity within the theological landscape (Dube, 2016; Maluleke, 2018; Chitando & Kilonzo, 2018). Redemptive masculinity concept is calling for the reconstruction of masculinity in social institutions, religion and culture, due to toxic masculine behaviour that has perpetuated gendered pandemics (Zengenene, 2021). Being born-again means that one has been redeemed from one's toxic behaviour and is now living a new life. For men, it means they forsake traditional norms of masculinity and adopt positive life-giving masculinities (Manglos 2010; Lindhardt, 2015). For this study, this framework looks at born-again, redeemed men and how they navigate and perform their traditional masculinity roles. It explores the relationship between traditional and transformed masculinities through the Pentecostal doctrine of rebirth/born-againism and how to reconcile these two worlds in their everyday lives.

Traditional masculine ideology has been used to define how men should construct their manhood. The postcolonial context, however, offers men the ability to redefine and construct

a new man (Morrell & Swart, 2005; Pyke, 2020). Traditional masculine ideology proposes that men perform and maintain a specific gender identity that reflects the socially accepted norm of masculinity (Borgogna and McDermott, 2022). In his study with Alexandra township in Johannesburg, South Africa, Langa (2020) highlights that men are often at contention with the hegemonic notions of masculinity, arguing that it is an unattainable ideal, and they therefore are open to alternative masculinities. Hegemonic norms of masculinity have been blamed for encouraging toxic and dangerous masculinity and are believed to be the main driving force behind gendered pandemics in Africa. To remedy or address this, Chitando and Chirongoma (2012) propose a concept of redemptive masculinity which is a religio-cultural resource to reconstruct masculinities. This concept was conceptualised by The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, whose work challenges the patriarchal discourses used to oppress women in religious and cultural contexts. They argue that religion and culture have often treated women as second-class citizens, and they call for transformation of these structures (Dube, 2016).

Redemptive masculinity is a concept used to characterise and identify masculinities that are life-giving in a world reeling from the effects of violence and the AIDS pandemic (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012:1). As a theological concept of transforming masculinities, it also invokes terms like alternative, progressive, and transformative masculinities. Transformative masculinities aim to generate masculinities that transform the workplace into a gender equitable community (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012:2). Programmes of transforming and reconstructing masculinities have focused on challenging social gender norms and structure, such as culture, to reduce the rate and perpetuation of gendered pandemics. The work of Khuphuka projects in northern KwaZulu-Natal and Sonke Gender Justice, among other organisations, focus on transforming toxic and dangerous masculinities during gendered pandemics. The Khuphuka programme is a gender transformation programme targeting men and boys.<sup>13</sup> York (2014) asserts that this project reduced GBV and risk-taking behaviour, and increased self-esteem, communication and domestic responsibility among men and boys. Alternative masculinities promote the tolerance of accepting various forms of sexuality, the deconstruction of gender barriers and promotion of economic equality (Dube, 2016). According to Dube (2016), alternative masculinity is used to criticise patriarchy and contends the ideology that men are socialised into believing that they are to lead, control and be decision-

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<sup>13</sup> <https://mandalatrust.org/project/the-khuphuka-project-kwazulu-natal-south-africa>.

makers. It critiques the way that culture upholds patriarchal practices of masculinity. Furthermore, Maluleke (2018) argues that for men to be liberated or transformed, dangerous practices of what it means to be a man must be eliminated, and other productive ways of constructing manhood must be explored.

As a religio-cultural resource, through positive behaviour, attitude and norms towards women and children, redemptive masculinity facilitates the construction of an alternative masculinity. The doctrine of rebirth/born-againism is popular among Pentecostal churches and believers, a fundamental requirement. As part of a larger transformative, liberating and redemptive project of masculinity (Van Klinken, 2011; Lindhardt, 2015), this concept requires that men give up their patriarchal privilege and publicly denounce toxic and harmful notions of masculinity. Chitando and Kilonzo (2018) argue that Pentecostal traditions have redeeming qualities that facilitate the transformation process. Masculinity as a gender construct is fluid and plural, meaning that men can change how they constrict their masculinity by adopting positive behaviour that is not harmful (Morrell, 2001; John, Settler & Siwila, 2013). Born-again men have already taken the first step to transformation by adopting a religious identity and by committing to a change of lifestyle. However, they are still active members of a society that expects them to be patriarchal.

In his conceptualisation of redemptive masculinity, Ezra Chitando relies on the contours of African Pentecostal beliefs and teachings on redemption. Moreover, masculinity being plural implies it is not a fixed identity or set of characteristics, it can still change (Morrell, 2001). It is this change that informs the possibility of constructing positive and life changing masculinities, and men are gender equitable in their practices, beliefs, behaviours, and religious beliefs. To realise this transformation, Chitando and Chirongoma (2012:26) outline the characteristics of gender equitable men:

- Men who are respectful to women and show concern about their feelings and opinions.
- Share domestic responsibilities and share responsibility for reproductive health issues.
- Men who seek relationships based on equality and intimacy rather than sexual conquest.
- Men who are opposed to gender-based violence and are not homophobic.

I would propose an additional characteristic: men who critically engage with the systematic realities informed by patriarchy. It has been argued that for any gender transformation and equality to take place, men must give up some of their patriarchal privilege (Chitando, 2007).

Adriaan van Klinken has produced research focusing on masculinity construction in the African Pentecostal context, specifically in Zambia. In his exploration of masculinity and born-again Pentecostal men, he uses a model of biblical manhood. This model not only addresses issues of dominant patriarchal ideals of masculinity religion but also issues of the alternative masculine ideal. The biblical manhood model is made up of four characteristics: responsibility, headship, leadership, and provision (Van Klinken, 2013:119-123). These characteristics are aligned with the vision of the redemptive masculinity concept. Responsibility is the fundamental basis that defines biblical manhood within the Pentecostal church. In Van Klinken's earlier work on conversion narratives, men highlight that after being born again or converted, they realised that they are responsible for the well-being of their families and others around them. Within the religious/theological landscape, responsibility is understood in terms of provision and leadership (Van Klinken, 2013; Chitando & Kilonzo, 2018). According to Van Klinken (2013), this model outlines how Pentecostal masculinities are constructed as alternative masculinities. Redemptive masculinity as a religio-cultural resource offers tools of constructing positive and life-giving masculinity in civil society and its religious landscape.

The use of redemptive masculinity concept for this study is not to criticise the traditional masculine ideology which has informed the construction of hegemonic masculinities under the patriarchal framework, but rather as a religio-cultural resource to unpack the redemptive nature invoked by Pentecostal masculinities, and the difficulties that men face in their navigation with both traditional and Pentecostal beliefs of masculinity. Pentecostal men, regardless of their new identity, are still expected to embody and perform traditional masculinity roles and behaviour while also embodying a redeemed masculinity in Christ. Lindhardt (2015) argues that men are often in conflict with themselves because they must still be part of a society in which they publicly denounced hegemonic notions of masculinity. Therefore, understanding the complexities of masculinity within the religious landscape enables us to engage the lived realities of born-again men and how they navigate between traditional and Pentecostal norms of masculinity. Masculinity construction is also influenced by visual representations of manhood.

A distinction between African masculinity theory and redemptive masculinity must be made to erase any ambiguity as frames used to theorise born-again men in Africa. African masculinity theory studies African black men in their context and considers their lives experiences and factors (socio-economical, structural and political) that impacts their process of masculinity construction in a post-colonial context. When a man becomes born-again as

explored in the previous section, adopt a new religious identity that requires radical transformation from hegemonic behaviour and embody a redeemed masculine identity. Redemptive masculinity theory<sup>14</sup> studies men within the religious context and acts as a resource in which men could construct an alternative masculine identity that is life giving and positive. It provides contours in which men can challenge that patriarchal ideologies of masculinity, challenging toxic hegemonic masculinities and ultimately, constructing a redeemed men that is transformed. For this study, they are used to explore how born-again men make meaning of their lived experiences and how they navigate and negotiate their masculinity between against dominant patriarchal ideologies and those constructed within the Pentecostal context. Within contemporary society, men's engagement with media material in its different types of mode influence their masculinity construction process. The following theory explores the visual representation of men and how it affects the masculinity construction process.

### **3.4 Media theory**

Masculinity construction is also influenced by institutions such as media, religion, and culture. We live in a media-saturated society where there are multiple representations and reproductions of masculinity through contemporary media or popular culture, such as lifestyle magazines, social media and traditional media (television, film, and radio) (Lewington, Sebar & Lee, 2018). According to Van der Watt and Louw (2016), media provides different representations of what it means to be male or female, shaping our views on gendered identities and speaking to our deep social beliefs. It has been argued that these representations influence how men view themselves and construct their masculine identities against these representations (Hoover & Coats, 2011; Viljoen, 2013). Christian men are not exempt from these representations; their masculinity process is also influenced by media.

To explore this visual representation, media theory offers us an in-depth understanding of contemporary media and how it constructs and influences our realities (Wood, 2008).<sup>15</sup> I will

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<sup>14</sup> The characteristic of redemptive masculinity has the potential to explore diverse masculinities specifically the lives of homosexual men. However, this theory is limited to heterosexual Christian men who are navigating and negating their masculinity against the toxic notions of hegemonic masculinity. It's a theory that is used as a resource for faith communities to construct an alternative masculine identity.

<sup>15</sup> I use media and mediatisation synonymously or interchangeably in this project because these two terms mean the same thing but are used differently in their discipline. Media theory is used in media and advertising as pillar to explore how consumers interact and respond to a particular product being sold, and how this product is packed to be appealing to its consumer. It also looks at how media influence's identity construction

use three metaphors to reflect on the visual representations and the role of media in influencing how men construct their identities. Meyrowitz (1993) identifies three metaphors: conduits, language, and environment. He argues that these metaphors enable us to read beyond the images.

Media theory offers nuances for understanding gender representation in contemporary mass media and popular culture. According to Wood (2008:57), society is a media-saturated space where media is engaged in our daily lives. Engagement with media representation of gender offers different images of men and women and how they relate to each other. Morgan (2011) asserts that the process of mediation within the communication and media technology sphere has spread into other sectors of social life such as religion, politics, and the social construction of realities. Traditionally, media has been defined as channels that target receivers with the delivery of messages to shape opinions (Morgan, 2013). This may be true even today, but media has also become a tool to be understood as technologies of sensations of embodied forms of participation in extended communication joined in the imaginations of its consumers (Morgan, 2013). As with advertising of commercialised products by corporations, religion has also appropriated media to further its own agenda. Asamoah-Gyadu (2015) asserts that Christian communities use the media, particularly the web, as an opportunity to express and practice their religion in ways that bridge the gap between online and offline presence.

Kulu (2008) asserts that religion has become a key player in mediated spaces, using this platform for a variety of functions such as evangelism, missionary work and advertising, and as a tool for communicating and engaging their audience. For Kalu (2008), media images shape and influence people's attitude towards religious practices and beliefs, but they also influence gendered identities. He argues that seeing is believing, and that the use of promotional material such as posters is designed to appeal to an audience that understands the logic or meaning behind the image. For example, the advertisement of Christian men's conferences relays a particular message the church is sending regarding men and the kind of manhood they should aspire to.

Hjarvard (2008) introduces mediatization theory within religious studies as a framework to understand how media functions as an agent of religious and social change. However, for this framework to be used effectively in the theorising of images and how they influence social and

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and its role in shaping our realities. Mediatization is used in the religious/theological discipline to unpack how images work as agents of both religion and religious change.

religious changes, Meyrowitz (1993) suggests that we analyse images using three dominant media metaphors: conduits, language and environment. Media metaphors are descriptive aspects of media and seen as figures of speech that have aesthetic implication (Meyrowitz, 1993).



*Figure 3: Men's conference promotional material*

Media conduits are an important source of information about religion and society as they produce content that consumers react to (Hjarvard, 2016). This metaphor is important in analysis of media images because it argues that we first react to content when using media, not the medium used. If the message communicated appeals to us, we either accept it or reject it with belief or disbelief. Meyrowitz (1993) asserts that media content minimises the attention given to the nature of a particular medium used to communicate that message. For example, gendered representation of masculinity presents a globalised ideal of hegemonic masculinity as an ideal that men must aspire to, and we pay less attention to the fact that magazines often sell a fantasy. Secondly, media as language focuses its attention on the unique grammar each medium uses to present its message (Meyrowitz, 1993; Hjarvard, 2016). It looks at the variables that can be manipulated in terms of perception, comprehension, emotional reaction and behavioural responses. Morgan (2014) asserts that images speak to deep societal beliefs and construction. Using certain language in presenting gendered images influences how consumers

receive that message and speaks to those beliefs we hold dear to us. Social media as modern form of communication influences how we receive whatever is presented to us. Lastly, media as an environment examines the feature of a medium used. It looks at the characteristics of the media that make it different from other mediums (Meyrowitz, 1993). It looks at how the social context surrounding the medium affects its context and language. The metaphors do not look at images as just images, but also explore the meaning behind the image, the language used to describe the images and the reasons behind them.

The main assumption of mediatization theory rests on the idea that media is the centre of social change and an agent for religious change (Krüger, 2018). The mediated images used to communicate certain messages through metaphors, as outlined by Meyrowitz (2019) and Hjarvard (2016), images are like masks that offer access through the mask of the viewer. The messaging behind gendered representations is informed by social constructions of gender – they communicate messages of gender, how it performs, and what masculinity and femininity should look like. For example, “guy movies” often speak to the salient characteristics of masculinity that men are violent and sexual, and that men should be providers and protectors (Zeglin, 2016). These images are agents and actors who have the power to construct social meaning through audiences’ engagement with the complexities of relations found in the visual arena. Not only are they powerful in constructing meaning and gender identity, but they also interface with human beings very powerfully because they respond to deeply held perceptual beliefs and behaviours (Morgan, 2014). Working within the South African context, Scharnick-Udemans (2020) employs this theory to show the complex ways in which gender is implicated in the narrative of the mediatization of religion by drawing on the exploitation of women in religious media. In this mediated context, she argues that these narratives of religious media reinscribe the traditional norm of authority and gender roles (Scharnick-Udemans, 2020).

Using these metaphors, this framework engages the intersection of media and masculinity construction of born-again men. They will be used to explore how contemporary born-again men navigate their negotiation and construction of masculinity in their everyday life and how media influences this process. In unpacking the messaging behind images that the research process will engage, media theory provides the analytic tools needed to provide a more nuanced understanding of the metaphors used in the images.

The study of men and masculinities in an African context requires a careful reading of the masculinity landscape within this context. It has been argued that men in postcolonial context

cannot be studied outside of their lived realities which inform their masculinity construction process (Morrell & Swart, 20015). Taking lead from Connell's southern theory concept, an African centred approach such as African Masculinity Theory offers scholars an opportunity to engage with structural, social-historical and socio-economic factors that influence how men construct their identities. AMT offers nuances of how men reconstruct what it means to be a man in postcolonial context and offers a strategy for including indigenous knowledge and generating African-centred theories (Mfecane, 2018; Ratele, 2020). It provides contextual understanding of men's lived realities and how they navigate and negotiate their masculine identities. Within the horizon of AMT, redemptive masculinity concept/theory further provides contours for studying men from a theological perspective.

Being born-again is a religious identity that one adopts when converting to Pentecostalism. For men, however, it requires them to forsake their hegemonic masculine norms and reconstruct their masculine identities in a positive and life-giving manner (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012). Redemptive masculinity theory provides a religio-cultural resource which can be used to understand and reconstruct masculinity both traditionally and religiously. This framework offers tools with which to explore how men navigate their masculinities between the religious/theological and traditional norms and how these norms influence their masculinity process. Contemporary society is saturated with mediated representations of masculinity used by popular culture or mass media. Through men's lifestyle magazines, social networking sites, adverts and television, popular culture provides gendered representations of what it means to be a man (Vokey et al., 2013). Media theory offers tools to explore the visual representation of masculinity through three media metaphors: conduits, language, and environments (Meyrowitz, 1993). These metaphors provide us with tools to both explore media's influence in the process of masculinity construction and unpack the messaging behind the images in popular culture.

The combination of these frames considers the intersection of media, religion and culture in the process of masculinity construction. As a unit, they offer a multi-layered approach to understanding masculinities in a contemporary society where meaning is socially constructed and focuses on men as gendered beings whose identity construction is influenced by media consumption, religious traditions, beliefs, and the social expectation to perform masculine roles. They also require us to be innovative with research methodologies that we use and contribute toward the knowledge production process with participants.

### **3.5 Research methodology**

The previous section outlined the theoretical underpinnings of this study. As illustrated above, this study is located within a larger framework of masculinity theory, specifically focusing on African masculinity theory. AMT prioritises the lived experiences of African black men in a postcolonial context. It does so by exploring the socio-historical and political factors that influenced how black men construct their masculine identities and how they relate to the world. It also looks at the socio-economic factors that prevented them from actively participating in the economy and how this structural exclusion influences how they see themselves as men (Morrell & Swart, 2005; Mfecane, 2018; Ratele, 2020). Within the broader horizon of AMT, and to make sense of Pentecostal faith traditions, redemptive masculinity theory will also be used. Redemptive masculinity theory offers nuances of understanding and theorising men within a larger Christian faith landscape as a religio-cultural resource of fostering positive, transformed, and life-giving masculinities (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012). For this study, it will be used to engage with the religious aspect of masculinity, looking at how faith traditions influence the process of masculinity construction and how born-again men navigate between traditional norms of masculinity and transformative/Pentecostal masculinity. At the background of this complex terrain of masculinity is the role of popular culture/mass media and its influence on how men negotiate their masculinity against representations of masculinity. According to Lemon (2010), media is an important site for perpetuating dominant ideologies in the construction of gendered identities. Van der Walt and Louw (2016) also concede that media has represented masculinity through a hegemonic body ideal that men must live up to. To engage this visual representation and portrayal of masculinity, media theory will be used to explore how these images influence the masculinity construction process.

Drawing on these theoretical underpinnings, this section discusses the research methodology which was used to execute the study and to answer research questions. This study used participatory research methodology within qualitative research traditions. This section discusses the research design, using phenomenology perspective which focuses on people's lived experiences. This design is informed by the theoretical frame that was used in this study. It further details the data collection process using three collection methods: auto-photography, individual interviews and focus group interviews. The execution of the data collection process will be outlined step by step to ensure validity and reliability of this study. To analyse the data, I will use thematic content analysis to analyse interview transcripts and extract dominant themes from within the data set.

Considering the theoretical underpinnings of this study as discussed above, participatory research methodology was chosen because this study explored the embodied complexities of masculinity. According to Field-Springer and Striley (2018), embodied experiences are disclosed in meaning that is deeply rooted in how we experience ourselves as gendered beings and the society in which we express our genderness. In unpacking this embodiment, we must understand the concept of self/being as expressed in the presence of others and validated social norms and socially constructed knowledge. This socially constructed knowledge influences our actions through performance and communicative events. We become who social institutions such as media, religion and culture have prescribed us to be. Understanding this embodied experience of masculinity offers an important contribution for understanding how we manage meanings and construct knowledge in the context of African masculinities (Field-Springer & Striley, 2018). The only way we can fully understand what it means to be a born-again man is from an embodied experience and place. Participatory research methodology offers an opportunity to produce knowledge from the embodied complexities of being a born-again man in contemporary society. It offers both the researcher and participants the opportunity to deeply explore and reflect on these embodied experiences to co-construct and produce knowledge and meaning of what it means to be a born-again man.

### **3.5.1 Participatory research methodology**

Participatory research methodology (PR methodology) is a knowledge production method that is collaborative work between the researcher and the participants. Vough and Jacque (2020:1) define it as a systematic method of enquiry, and a direct collaboration with those affected by the phenomenon being studied for the purpose of change or action. This methodology has often been used in the applied human science fields such as psychology and social work (Blackbeard & Lindegger, 2014), and for social action research such as intervention programmes (Graaff 2017) that aim to bring gender transformation. In religious studies, this methodology has been used by Chakraborty (2009), investigating the lives of young Muslim women in the bustees of Kolkata. Boonzaier and Kessi (2018) assert that this methodology provides opportunities to address gaps in our knowledge while simultaneously contributing to social change. Furthermore, the methods describe subjective experiences of participants from their own perspective as means of better understanding the issues they face.

According to Cornwall and Jewkes (1995), the difference between participatory research methodology and other research methods lies in the location of power within the various stages

of the research process. It is important to note that though this project does not seek to provide a solution to the problem, it seeks to understand how contemporary born-again men navigate and negotiate their masculinity construction process in the intersection of media, religion and culture. As a methodology, it offers a deeper insight into the contextual situatedness of meaning and the dynamics used to construct that meaning (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). The strength of PR methodology resides in the exploration of local knowledge and perceptions (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995).

This methodology is situated in the qualitative research tradition which studies things and participants in their natural environment to make sense of or interpret the phenomenon in terms of the meaning it brings to the people (Creswell, 2013). Berg (2007:8) defines qualitative research as a framework that seeks to answer questions by investigating different settings and the individuals who inhabit those settings. The qualitative research methodology then informs the research design and the data collection process and analysis.

### **3.5.2 Research design**

The study uses the phenomenological approach which will allow me to investigate the lived realities of born-again men and how they construct and negotiate their masculinity. According to Creswell (2013), phenomenology describes common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences. It focuses on describing what participants have in common as they experience that phenomenon. Groenewald (2004) illustrates that phenomenology is concerned with the unpacking and interpretation of the inner essence of the participants' cognitive procession regarding the same experience. The phenomenon being studied in this process is the masculinity construction of born-again men. Social research has shown that masculinity as constructed differently across different contexts. It has also shown that there are competing ideals of masculinity within the same context (Morrell, 2001; Morrell et al., 2012; Jewkes & Morrell, 2018). It focuses on the process of masculinity construction of born-again men whose faith traditions and beliefs are based on Pentecostalism.

### **3.5.3 Sampling technique**

This study is situated in the qualitative research traditions and will therefore use the nonprobability sampling method. Non-probability sampling method refers to any kind of sampling where the selection of research participants is not determined by the principle of randomness (Durkheim & Painter, 2006). Berg (2007) asserts that nonprobability samples do not require a list of all possible elements in a full population and the ability to access research

participants. It will use the purposive sampling technique where researchers use their judgement when it comes to selection of participants (Sharma, 2017). Participants for the study will be purposefully selected to inform an understanding of the research question. It will use a homogenous sample of born-again men in the Pentecostal faith traditions. The sampling criteria are as follows:

- Must identify as a man
- Must identify as Pentecostal and born-again
- Must be 21 years of age and above

Participants for this study will be selected from the different Pentecostal churches in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands region. The midlands region consists of urban and rural communities with different socio-economic and educational backgrounds. For this reason, there will be two groups: one rural and one urban. This study will have the same participants throughout the research process and at the different stages of the data collection process.

The participant recruitment process for this study involved three stages. Firstly, the research information letter was circulated on social media platforms and communication sites such as Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp messaging. The information sheet was further shared with prospective participants who were also asked to refer me to anyone else that might also be interested. The low up-take on the initial call for participants and word of mouth forced me to explore other ways in which I can recruit participants. I therefore created a digital poster and posted on my personal social media and networking sites.

#### **3.5.4 Data collection**

Data collection is a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering information to answer research questions (Creswell, 2013). Data will be collected using three data collection methods: auto-photography, focus groups and individual interviews. The data collection is quite a lengthy process, so contact will be made with the selected participants prior to scheduling the interviews to finalise the administrative part of the process. In this online session, participants will be briefed about what is expected of them during the data collection process, issued with consent forms and briefed about the aim and objective of this project.

Auto-photography is a data collection tool that elicits dialogue between the researcher and the participants in the process of knowledge production (Blackbeard & Lindegger, 2014). It is a

self-documentation which provides context for both internal and external dialogues between the participants' perceptions and the visual record of those perceptions (Blackbeard & Lindegger, 2014). This data collection tool will be used to explore how men navigate masculinity issues in everyday life – a glimpse into their reality. The purpose of this tool is to get participants to offer daily reflection as to where they find themselves as men on that day. It will allow them to reflect on their daily experiences. Reflection is an essential aspect of participatory research, as participants and the researcher are required to disclose some personal dispositions to contribute to the knowledge production process (Blackbeard & Lindegger, 2014). This process occurs over time, where participants and the researcher engage in the process to create reflections. Participants will use their phones to send these reflections along with the image that reflects their embodied masculine experience as and when it happens. They will be requested to reflect on themes that arise out of this focus group and send an image of masculinity that describes their experience of the day's event. For example, if they received a child maintenance order, they should send a picture that describe how they feel at that moment. It will provide alternative images that represent born-again masculinity according to their lived experiences.

The second data collection method is semi-structured individual interviews. According to McGraff (2019), qualitative interviews allow the researcher to explore matters that are unique to the experience of the participants in depth. Miller and Glassner (2020) assert that qualitative interviews provide access to social worlds and how individuals make sense of their experiences and their place in the social world. They further assert that interviews are an exclusive interaction between the interviewer and interviewee where they both construct narrative versions of the social world (Miller & Glassner, 2020:53). Individual interviews will be semi-structured. The main purpose of an individual interview is to understand the meaning behind the responses given by the participants and their experience of the phenomenon (Moser & Kortsjens, 2018). The semi-structured interview allows the researcher to ask open-ended questions and can-do follow-up questions based on the individual responses. This interview will give a personal account of what it means to be a born-again man, individual experiences of being a born-again man and how the participants understand their masculinity in relation to their faith traditions.

The third data collection method is the focus group interview. A focus group is a group discussion on a particular topic that is being researched (Gill, 2018:293). This interview will be used to generate a collection of views and the meaning behind those views of masculinity

as it intersects with culture, religion, and faith traditions. It also offers an in-depth understanding of participants' beliefs and experiences (Gill, 2018). There will be two focus groups, and each group will be made up of eight participants, which adds up to 16 participants in total. The purpose of this activity is understanding the dominant discourse of masculinity construction among born-again men, and to ascertain the role of media, culture, religion and faith traditions in the process of masculinity construction.

The researcher will bring two images to form part of the discussion in relation to media's roles in the process of masculinity construction. Participants will also be asked to bring images that inform their understanding of masculinity. Furthermore, to provide nuanced understanding of media's role in the construction of masculinity, the participants will be forwarded two promotional video materials that were used for the promotion of Pentecostal men's conference. These videos formed part of the researcher's Master of Theology Project looking at Pentecostal men's conference promotional material and the reproduction of masculinity in the Christian faith landscape at the backdrop of Gender Based Violence. The first video was produced by an Afrikaner church located in Bloemfontein calling on men to attend a man's conference titled "Might Men of Valour"<sup>16</sup>. It has the following transcription:

*"Mighty Man of Valor, what is your war cry? Tired? Broken? Trying every day? Harder, faster, better? So much pressure, so much stress. It's time to rise Mighty Man. 18-20 August, Mighty Man of Valor Conference www.cfwctv.co.za Join us as we rise before our King."*

The second video was from *Rivers Church* in South Africa who were also inviting men to their 2021 conference<sup>17</sup>. It had the following transcription:

*"What is a man? What does society say a man is? Men are trash. We hear terms like toxic masculinity, and real men don't cry. But it's not all negative. We also hear that men are meant to be strong. Men are providers, caretakers. But where does this strength come from, and how does it look? To truly understand any living creature, we have to get the definition from its creator. So, what does God say about men? He says that we are made in His image.*

*That we are new creations in Christ. That His power is made perfect in our weakness. He says no temptation is beyond what we can handle. He has plans for us, plans to give us hope and a future. He tells us to be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. And we are strong and courageous because He is with us. Whatever God is going to do in your life, He's going to use everything that you've already been through.*

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.roaringtruthministries.co.za/index.php/mighty-men-of-valor>.

<sup>17</sup> <https://rivers.church/mens-conference-2021/> Accessed 20 July 2020

He will use the mistakes that you have made. He will use the hurt that you have been through. God uses the pressures from your past to form the treasure of your future.”

This session will focus more on the objectives of the study, and participants will be expected to engage with the following aspects of the research process:

- The discourse of being born-again and what it implies in the process of masculinity construction.
- How they navigate culture, media, religion, and faith traditions in their everyday lives and how these factors influence their masculinity construction process.
- Engage with mediated images of born-again men/Pentecostal images of born-again men as represented in the media and how, if at all, they relate to these images.
- Reflect on the images based on their lived realities and their understanding of being born-again compared with the church’s image of born-again men.

### **3.5.5 Data analysis**

The process of data analysis provides an in-depth and detailed description and interpretation of the research topic (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016:100). Vaismoradi et al. (2016:101) assert that the key to this process is the systematic process of examining meaning and providing description of the lived realities of participants through generation of themes. For the qualitative data, the study will use thematic content analysis (TCA) as a data analysis tool. According to Anderson (2005), TCA is a descriptive representation of qualitative data. It focuses on the textual data and mostly uses qualitative interview transcripts. This tool provides a systematic method and procedure for identifying and generating themes that arise from analysing qualitative interview transcripts (Anderson, 2005; Clark & Braun, 2017). Data will be analysed by providing detailed descriptions of both individual and focus group interview transcripts. This is done to ensure internal validity, which refers to the extent to which the research findings are a true reflection of reality (Brink, 1993).

A theme is an attribute that organises a set of common, repeated ideas or descriptions that enable the researcher to answer the research question (Clark & Braun, 2017:3). They further assert that these themes provide a framework for organised analysis of research observations based on the collected data. Due to the nature of qualitative data, it is flexible in generating meaning and the identification of patterns across the data and according to participants’ lived realities (Anderson, 2005; Clark & Braun, 2017). The detailed interview transcripts allow the

researcher to pick up themes that are dominant, which will further be explored and discussed in the discussion chapter.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY – Participatory Research Method				
Participants/Sample	Data collection methods/tools			Data Analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 participants for auto-photography <i>(Volunteers from the focus group)</i></li> <li>• 10 participants for individual interview <i>(5 Midlands Urban; 5 Midlands Rural)</i></li> <li>• 16 participants for focus groups. <i>Two groups (8 Midlands Urban; 8 Midlands Rural)</i></li> </ul>	Auto-photography	Individual Interview	Focus Groups	Thematic Content analysis
	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Activity</b>	
	The participants will give daily reflections on the day's event that impacted them the most and send a masculine image depicting that moment in their lives based on the themes arising from the focus group discussions.	Semi-structured interview questions. This interview will give a personal account of what it means to be a born-again man, individual experiences of being a born-again man, and their understanding of masculinity and masculinity in faith.	Focus group discussions in three sites. Participants will be asked to discuss their understanding of masculinity and that of a born-again man. They will also be asked to discuss images of masculinity.	
	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understanding lived realities of men that influence their process of masculinity construction.</li> <li>2. Explore the embodiment of vulnerability as a masculine characteristic.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Personal understanding of what it means to be a born-again man.</li> <li>2. The individual experience of being a born-again man in civil society and faith landscape. How they navigate culture, media, religion, and tradition in their process of masculinity.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Generating central themes about the research topic and themes for reflection diaries.</li> <li>2. Engage with images of born-again masculinity as portrayed in the media.</li> <li>3. Knowledge production through the discussion of alternative images of born-again masculinity.</li> </ol>	

Table 1: Participatory research method

### **3.6 Validity and reliability**

According to Silverman and Marvasti (2008:259) validity in qualitative research is the extent to which it accurately represents the social phenomenon that it refers to. It is concerned with the interpretation of results and whether the researcher did what they were supposed to do (Perekyla, 2020). Noble and Smith (2015) define validity as the integrity and application of the research process and methods undertaken, and the level of precision in which findings accurately reflects the data. To ensure validity of the results, the following steps will be taken:

- Account for personal biases that may have influenced my interpretation of the findings. I will keep a reflection journal in which I detail my experiences during the data collection process and some parts of it will be included in the data presentation section.
- Meticulously keeping all the records and interview transcripts to demonstrate a clear decision trail and ensuring transparency. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The auto-photographic data will also be exported to a word document or an email, with the exact time, date and what was discussed. The names of the participant will however be redacted from the data for ethical purposes.
- Include a direct abstract from the interview transcripts, detailing verbatim descriptions of participants' accounts.

Reliability in research is concerned with the consistency, stability and repeatability of the participants' account, as well as the researcher's ability to collect and record the information accurately (Brink, 1995:36). Reliability refers to the soundness of the research, focusing on the research method chosen and the way in which these methods were applied and implemented in the study (Brink, 1995; Rose & Johnson, 2020:4). With the chosen methodology, I will ensure that the knowledge production is co-constructed by the participants and myself by aligning the data collection process with the chosen theoretical framework. Each of the sub-research questions corresponds with the data collection method.

I will ensure that transcripts are as detailed as possible with participants' accounts of their masculine construction processes and available upon request for validation.

All participants will be given a consent form before participating in the study. The consent form will detail the aims and objectives of the study, informing participants that their participation is voluntary, and their real identities will not be used in the write-up process of the research. The researcher will also inform them that they are free to withdraw at any time should they feel uncomfortable.

### **3.7 Positionality**

I am a black South African man, born and raised in KwaZulu-Natal. For as long as I can remember, religion has always been a part of my life, and now I am a faith leader within the African Pentecostal context and affiliated with the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa. I am a contemporary young man who sometimes does not conform to the hegemonic ideals of masculinity. I have developed my own outlook on religion based on my theological training, conversations with other people from other denominations and my own life experiences.

Being situated in this context, I often find myself in conflict with the masculine identity I need to embody, depending on the environment I am in. This is largely due to the expectation that has been placed on me as a born-again man and faith leader. As a contemporary man, I am still trying to figure out my own masculinity against these rigid and traditional norms of masculinity, which are unattainable at times. My engagement in this study is based on my awareness of the complexity of the process of masculinity, resulting in the construction a contemporary born-again man who is still figuring things out, yet is expected to embody traditional norms of masculinity. It is also based on my engagement with masculinity production and representation in Pentecostal context where patriarchal notions of masculinity prevail, leaving little room for the exploration of an alternative masculine identity.

I am aware that this process might bring up uncomfortable issues for myself as well as the research participants as we embark on this knowledge production process. Being vulnerable

for men in general is never easy; I am hopeful that we can explore this and how it can deepen our understanding of masculinity.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

The principle of research ethics requires that participants must be treated with autonomy and that no harm is caused to participants during the research process. To ensure anonymity of participants, they will be required to sign a consent form. Anonymity refers to a participant's right to governance, privacy, and individual choice (Peitilam, Nurma & Halkoaho, 2020:4). Participants must be given an information sheet detailing the aims and objectives of the study, and what is expected from them. They will also be reminded that all that is discussed within the research process will remain anonymous and their real names will not be used during the writing process and reporting.

The research process might bring things up for participants and may create emotional discomfort. Psychological support will be provided for participants should they need it during or after the research process. This will be done to ensure that no direct or indirect harm befalls participants (Wassenaar & Mamotee, 2012). The protocol reference number for this project is **HSSREC/0004808/2022**.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of the methodology and theoretical concepts that were used in conceptualising and designing this research process. This study is framed within three theoretical underpinnings: African masculinity, redemptive masculinity and media theory. The study aimed to explore how born-again men navigate media, religion and culture in the process of masculinity construction within Pentecostal traditions. From a postcolonial context or global south knowledge, the study used AMT to engage with social-historical, economic and structural factors that play a role in how men define and construct their masculine identities within the South African context (Ratele, 2014; Dery et al., 2021). It draws on black African men's lived experiences and their process of masculinity construction, exploring the complexities of masculinity construction and negotiation among born-again men within the Pentecostal faith traditions. Within the broader horizon of AMT,

redemptive masculinity theory was used to engage the theological/religious aspects of the masculinity construction process of being a born-again man. Redemptive masculinity is a religio-cultural resource to construct life-giving and positive masculinities within a religious landscape and civil society (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012). As a framework, it offers contours of how born-again men construct their masculinities within Pentecostal faith traditions and how they navigate between traditional and Pentecostal notions of masculinity.

Research has shown that visual representation of masculinity through popular culture modes influence how men construct their masculinities (Vokey et al., 2013; Tan et al., 2018). Popular culture modes such as men's lifestyle magazines, television ads and social networking sites provide different representations of masculinity (Lewington et al., 2018). To engage with this visual representation and how it influences contemporary men in their masculinity construction process, I used media theory. Media theory enables us to understand the messaging behind the representations and how it is consumed by consumers by using three metaphors: conduit, language, and environment.

As part of the development and production of knowledge within the postcolonial context, participatory research methodology was chosen because this study explored the embodied complexities of masculinity from an embodied place. According to Field-Springer and Striley (2018), embodied experiences are disclosed in meaning that is deeply rooted in how we experience ourselves as gendered beings, and the society in which we express our genderness. Participatory research methodology is a knowledge production method that is collaborative between the researcher and participants. It can be defined as a systematic method of enquiry and direct collaboration with those affected by the phenomenon being studied for the purpose of change or action (Vough & Jacque, 2020:1).

This methodology used phenomenological perspective to design the study. Phenomenology allowed me to explore and investigate the lived experiences of born-again men and how they construct and negotiate their masculinity (Creswell, 2013). The data collection process included three data collection tools: individual interviews, focus group interviews and auto-photography.

The following chapter is the data presentation and analysis. In this chapter, I provide a descriptive process of the data collection process and the challenges that were encountered.

Furthermore, the chapter provides extracts or transcripts of every interview that was conducted for the study. Ten individual interviews and three focus group discussions were conducted, and three auto-photography reflections were received. A detailed analysis and description are provided in the following chapter. It also includes my personal diary reflections which I diarised throughout the data collection process.

## 4 CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

Chapter three of this study focused on exploring and unpacking the theoretical frameworks that focus on the intersection of media religion and culture. In exploring how men construct and negotiate their masculinity, African masculinity theory was used to engage men in the African context, exploring how the identity of a man as a gendered being has been influenced by social-historical, socio-economic and structural factors. As religious men, born-again Pentecostal men adapt a religion identity that separates them from hegemonic/traditional norms of masculinity as will be showcased in this chapter. Religio-cultural norms, however, do not exempt these men from masculinity performance and living up to social expectations of masculinity. To engage with these aspects of masculinity, redemptive masculinity was used to explore and engage the religio-cultural norms that men need to live up to, and how they navigate between traditional norms of masculinity and Pentecostal norms of masculinity. Research has shown that masculinity representation in popular culture/mass media influences how men construct their masculinities (Hoover & Coats, 2011; Vokey et al., 2013). To explore the visual representations of masculinity, how men relate to these representations and how they influence their process of masculinity construction, medial theory will be used to engage the meaning behind the portrayed images.

The combination of these frames considered the intersection of media, religion, and culture in the process of masculinity construction. As a unit, they offer a multi-layered approach to understanding masculinities in a contemporary society where meaning is socially constructed and focuses on men as gendered beings whose identity construction is influenced by media consumption, religious traditions, beliefs and the social expectation to perform masculine roles. They also required an innovative research methodology to be used and to contribute toward the knowledge production process together with participants.

Considering these theoretical underpinnings of this study, participatory research methodology was chosen because this study explores the embodied complexities of masculinity. According to Field-Springer and Striley (2018), embodied experiences are disclosed in meaning that is deeply rooted in how we experience ourselves as gendered

beings and the society in which we express our genderness. Participatory research methodology offered an opportunity to produce knowledge from the embodied complexities of being a born-again man in contemporary society. To explore these embodied experiences of masculinity, the study used three data collection methods: individual interview, focus group discussion and auto-photography.

This chapter is organised into three sections. The first section details the ten individual interviews that were conducted for the study. With each interview, I start by unpacking the mood and the feel of the interview and the interview process. At the end of some of the interviews, I offer personal reflection from my own reflection journal as explained in the previous chapter under positionality. Due to some interviews overlapping, I chose those sections that I found interesting to explore and engage with as part of the research aims and objectives. The second section details the focus group discussions with rural and urban men. The conceptualised sample size was eight participants per group, however, due to some difficulties, the rural group had seven participants and the urban group five. The last section of this chapter reports on the auto-photography reflection journals that have been sent by participants who volunteered to offer this reflection. For reliability purposes, extracts from interview transcripts are provided and then analysed. The questions asked during the data collection process are an attempt to answer the main research question and the four sub-research questions. At the end of this chapter, I outline these that were distilled from the data set collected for this study.

The individual interviews were conducted on different days, depending on the availability of the participants. They also took place in a variety of settings; some held in offices, an auditorium, and coffee shop. The participants identified as men, Pentecostal and born-again, except for one participant, who has struggled with his faith life and did not really know where to place himself. In this section, I will outline each interview disruption, the mood, the flow of the interview and I will share the interview. I will also share some of my journal reflections of each interview which gives insight into my own thoughts, questions and struggles about my own masculine identity as a Pentecostal born-again man<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> As a researcher who is located within this context and identify myself as a born-again man, this data collection process forced me to think and reflect on my own process of masculinity construction and some of the

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Relationship Status</b>	<b>Demographic/Location</b>
Sipho	44	Divorced, father of four and faith leader.	Nqutu, Northern KZN (Rural)
Themba	32	Single	Impendle – works for a faith-based organisation. (Rural)
Fox	23	Single	Impendle – works for a faith-based organisation. (Rural)
Bhut’omdla	26	Single	Mooi River – works for a faith-based organisation. (Urban)
Tshepo	40	Single	Emplweni – youth leader and professionally employed. (Rural)
Aphelele	31	Married, father of two and serves in church board.	Pietermaritzburg – professionally employed. (Urban).
Mpofu	25	Single	Pietermaritzburg – originally from Zimbabwe but now a South African citizen. (Urban)
Ntando	25	Single, pastor’s child	Transferred – actively involved in the church. (Rural)
Babakhe	33	Divorced/entangled, father of three	Hilton – professionally employed by an NGO. (Urban)
Freedom	27	Single	Pietermaritzburg – a political activist. (Urban)

*Table 2: Profile and demographics of participants in individual interviews*

Mpofu was my first interview, which took place on 24 February 2023. The interview was

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complexities. Some of the individual interview’s mirror some of the struggles that I also go through as a man navigating this space.

held at the place that he is currently renting in town. Prior to the interview he enquired about the type of questions that would be asked just so he can better prepare himself. I told him to think of it as more of a conversation where we would discuss what it means to be a born-again man and how you navigate and negotiate your masculinity in your everyday life. He seemed very prepared and seemed to give textbook-type responses at the beginning of the questions. However, as the interview continued, he began to open up and I could see his personality. He is a devout Christian man; the walls in the room were full of biblical verses and prayers for his parents that he wrote down. The open-ended questions allowed for us to have a proper conversation and allowed me to probe deeper.

The first interview question was: **According to your understanding, what does it mean to be a man?**

*“What I understand is...a man can be defined by gender, a male figure. Besides that, there is something, some characteristics that go with a man. I can summarize to CROM. C: creative, a man must be creative. R stands for responsibility. O stands for overcoming, a man is an overcomer, challenges and problems of life, a man should stand up and overcome those challenges for the family. M: Maturity, a man must be mature enough to handle issues, family issues.” (Mpofu, Individual interview, 26 February 2023)*

His response is quite interesting in that he uses a formula to define what manhood is and the characteristics thereof. I was particularly interested in the responsibility aspects of it. I asked a follow-up question:

**R: You speak of responsibility – what does that look like for you?**

*“For me, taking responsibility for example...going to work for your family, that is being responsible. When kids are not behaving, as a man, I have to discipline them, that’s being responsible. These are examples of being responsible as a man according to my own understanding.” (Mpofu, Individual interview, 26 February 2023)*

**R: In terms of overcoming, what have you overcome in your life?**

*“Just last week, my little sister had to go to college, my father didn’t have money, myself didn’t have money but that was the challenge I had to overcome, you know things are hard everywhere. But for me to sit back and fold my hands and say that there is a challenge, and cry and complain-it didn’t mean anything because at the end of the day it would have not solved anything. I had to stand up and overcome the challenge and find some other possibilities. Right now, my sister is in school, that’s being a man.” (Mpofu, Individual interview, 26 February 2023)*

The responses to these follow-up questions speak to each point that Mpofu makes. The responsibility he feels he has for his family made him stand up, overcome, and find other possibilities to ensure his sister went to school. Responsibility and overcoming are part of what defines manhood for him. His sense of manhood and his pride are validated by being able to be responsible for his family even though his father is still around. He also maintains that as a man, crying and complaining about things are not an option.

To engage on the influence of faith/religion and culture in how it shaped him as a man, I asked: **How has your faith and culture influenced your manhood?**

*“Culture has influenced my manhood or my upbringing as a man in so many ways. It is through culture that we were taught to work hard, it’s one of the aspects/principles that were taught through culture. For example, taking those works that we need to apply labour, it was for the man... Doing hard labour, it was for men.” (Mpofu, Individual interview, 26 February 2023)*

*“We have some principle in faith that have influenced me as a man. It is through faith we are taught respect, taught to have strong hearts, to be men, to be strong when problems come, stand up and pray.” (Mpofu, Individual interview, 26 February 2023)*

There seems to be a disjuncture between faith and culture in terms of principles that influenced his manhood. Culture taught hard labour, that is a value of a man, whereas faith/religion taught him respect and to be strong. The fact that he uses “strong” twice in once

sentence shows that this characteristic was and is entrenched in him. There is no alternative for being a man of faith but to be strong, stand up and pray.

**R: What does it mean to be a born-again man or man of God?**

*“For me, two words: repentance – to be a man of God, you can’t be a man of God without repentance. Two, life in Jesus – a man of God has life in Christ.”*  
(Mpofu, Individual interview, 26 February 2023)

As follow-up question, I asked him: **How does that new life in Christ look?**

*“Before being born-again or repentance, let’s say I would give you an example. There’s darkness and there is light. Life without Christ. Things are moving but in darkness. Being born again is the light, my old things that I used to crave for, everything is gone now. I have started a new page. I was born in a Christian family; mother was very strict and forced me to go to church. I have not been exposed to so many things that have hurt me.”* (Mpofu, Individual interview, 26 February 2023)

Being a man of God or a born-again man means you repent, and you receive life in Jesus. The repentance aspect refers to one changing one’s old ways and behaviour, and the things that a man used to crave; he starts on a new page and as a new being. There are a lot of things left unsaid in his response, like his old things – what are those old things and how did he come about those things, since he has never been exposed to things that could have hurt him? It has been interesting for him to talk about his old ways, but he seemed uncomfortable talking about them, so I did not probe further.

To engage how media has influenced his life as a born-again man, I asked him how media has influenced how he sees himself as a man. His response is based on his engagement with social media.

*“They have helped me so much and boosted my confidence. Facebook connects me or anyone with some other great man of so you can get inspiration, motivation from international speakers or African speaker. It gives exposure to see how other people are doing things. For example, I am a young man, not married, I don’t have all those things, so I learn from others.”* (Mpofu, Individual interview, 26 February 2023)

Media has boosted his confidence as a young man and has offered him opportunities of networking. He considers himself a great man, therefore affiliates with other great men to get inspiration. It has influenced him positively. He connects and identifies with the self-representation of these men.

To explore his everyday life and how he makes sense of his manhood, I asked him: **What is that one thing that makes you vulnerable?**

*“Failing, when I try to do something, I fail... I sometime question myself. A man should have a bold heart, why am I failing? Putting lot of effort yet I’m failing, I would question my own manhood.” (Mpofu, Individual interview, 26 February 2023)*

The entire conversation centred on his CROM model of what manhood is and how he defines his manhood. For him, failure is not an option and as a man, there is this notion that you must work hard to provide for your family as it is your responsibility. The faith aspect of it adds a layer in which he is expected to be strong, a man of prayer and one who must always find windows of possibilities to ensure that he lives up to his responsibilities as a man and a man of faith. Faith also taught him respect, which is ironic seeing that he did not mention this when it came to explaining how culture influenced his manhood. Culture seems to have embedded the idea that he must work hard as a man. Being a born-again man means that one must repent, and it requires a change in behaviour, leaving the old self behind and starting on a new page. At the end of the interview, I had reflected on my diary about my experience of the interview and the emotions it brought up for me.

#### ***Personal reflection: 24 February 2023***

*Everything became my responsibility at home and the expectation to be responsible came with that I had a more stable job that paid better.*

Sipho was going through a divorce at the time of the interview. He juggled being a father, a faith leader with a mega church, and his responsibility of being an older brother. The interview was held in my office, because he wanted a quiet space and it was a convenient place for us to meet. He was a bit nervous at the beginning, and I felt like he took me on a journey through the most defining moments of his life not only as a husband, father, brother,

uncle and leader, but also as a man, and the challenges that came with being a born-again man in a family that practiced cultural rituals. Some of the things that he alluded to in the interview felt very personal, and the interview itself was the most personal interview I had done. Understanding where he was in his life, I did not probe deeper because I would not have been able to handle the emotions that came with it – I could relate to some of the things he shared in the interview and have been through some of them myself. The interview took place on 4 April 2023.

We started the conversation by unpacking his understanding of what it means to be a man:

**According to your understanding, what does it mean to be a man?**

*“First, growing up in a rural area, manhood picture yasemafarm (rural area) is different from the city one. Rural area manhood is a man who is a provider, who is called to go and work and provide for the family...kogoli (Johannesburg). Ubaba nje wayesebenza ethekwini (my father used to work in a farm), we would see him twice a year, he would bring those things, sijabule ebuyile (be happy he’s back), so looking at that, manhood is somebody who focuses on being a provider per se. Then, getting born again in my teenage years, being exposed to other men in the church, it then became another picture added to that, because esontweni(church), they would emphasize the presence kabababa ekhaya (of the father at home), they would emphasize leadership kaBaba ekhaya, that he provides leadership and guidance to the kids and to the wife at some point.” (Sipho, Individual interview, 4 April 2023)*

*Uma bebuza sihalangana endleleni ukut “banjani abantwana ekhaya”, (if they ask when they bump into you, “How are the kids at home?” mabethi abantwana, nomama (the wife) is included in that question because she is regarded as ingane kwayena (a child herself). So, you can then say manhood means in their picture, a woman is a subordinate, they are there to bring warmth into the home, cook, etc., there’s no other roles they play. Even in community meeting, kuya amdadoda wodwa (only men attend), come back with the decisions made in the family here makuzokwenziwa umcimbi (when there will be a celebration), it’s the brother who meet and they tell the wife and the women ukuthi mgomhlaka bani senza ukut (that on this day, this is*

*what is going to be happening), it's a picture that I grew up with.” (Sipho, Individual interview, 4 April 2023)*

Sipho started unpacking his understanding of what it means to be a man by explaining how he understood manhood from his own context, “rural area”. He understood a man to be a provider and the complexities that come with being a provider. For example, his father was absent most of the time because he had to work. This touched on an aspect of absent fatherhood because they only saw him twice a year. He also touches on the complexities of manhood and fatherhood within the church, emphasising the presence of the father in the house to provide leadership and guidance for the household.

Interestingly, he points out the social gender hierarchy when it comes to men, women, and children. Women and children are treated almost the same; they have no decision-making rights within the family; they just do what they are told. They do not attend community meetings because it is a man's thing. Women only play a domestic role and are not that important within this context. He further continues in his response by saying,

*“Now, having grown up and having been exposed to mmm. Different types of life, rural and urban city life, manhood to me mean, first of all, I think society yethu (our) has given to us as, kube irresponsibility, it's a heavy thing on our shoulders as men, there is so much expectation that we do have as men or society that has put on us...responsibility. Still, there's the issue of provision, if uyindoda eshadile (if you are a married man), you are the one who provides more than the wife even if she is working.*

*Instinctively kukhina nasendedine ukut nje – you want to see the family well taken care of...also, amadoda (men) are people who do not talk, bawomafela ngaphakathi (they die in silence). Bafele ngaphakathin in our manhood because of...the stereotype and we force ourselves to maintain a certain stature and for ourselves to say that umuntu wesilisa (men) must not get in touch with their feelings, I feel like they should show their feelings, akukaweni to be less of a man if you get in touch with your feelings. For me it means getting in touch with who you are, it means for me as man, invest in yourself that you become a better father, husband, and friend, don't just give, give, and don't focus you.” (Sipho, Individual interview, 4 April 2023)*

In this previous extract, he was referring to his understanding of manhood as he was growing up in the rural area. In this second part of his response, he speaks as a grown man who has had his own experiences of what it means to be a man and has come to understand his own masculinity. He refers to manhood as responsibility that comes with a lot of expectations; this responsibility is a heavy one. Regardless of whether the wife earns more, the man is still expected to provide and take care of his family. He alludes that the concept of 50/50 in a marriage does not work because the man takes more responsibility in terms of provision. Interestingly, he touches on vulnerability in men. Men are not allowed to express their vulnerability, dying in silence because of the stereotype that men do not cry. For him, he came to realise that being a man means getting in touch with who you are, investing in yourself as a man to be a better father, husband, and friend – “manpowerment”.

**R: What does it mean to be a born-again man?**

*“Of course, we follow Christ, we believe in Christ, we are Christians. For me, it means that when I have seen the light, I must be exemplary to others, looking up to me, it means that you try walk by all means to live this Christianity of life. You navigate through it as you grow up, understanding yourself and what has God called you to be and all that.” (Sipho, Individual interview, 4 April 2023)*

Being a born-again man is about following Christ and being the light to the world. Apart from being exemplary and being looked up to, you navigate this religious identity throughout your life to understand who you are and what God has called you to be.

**R: How has media influenced your view of yourself as a man?**

*“At that stage you are more on a reciprocal position. Then there is a time when you grow up and you ask yourself why am I on Instagram, what’s my contribution, what do I want to watch, what don’t I like to watch, I think its covering into youth am I represented there? So which means you make choices of the things you want to watch, and those that you don’t want... but at some point we need to agree that we are human, asibina osuperman (we are not superman), there are things that you watch*

*that tempt you, they become a temptation, wena as umuntu wesilisa mhlawumbe mawukhuluma (you as a man when you talk about being about bring represented), you would watch sexual things, then as a husband you want to practice what you saw... [laughter]... so, mm but nakhona from time to time, you must apply maturity as to not to influence you otherwise.” (Sipho, Individual interview, 4 April 2023)*

Sipho in this extract reflects on his use of media, particularly Instagram, and alludes to the fact that he engages with it for certain purposes, not just for socialising. As a life coach and pastor, we can assume that he uses Instagram to post inspirational material. He also suggests that you make choices about what you watch and engage with in media. Temptation is of particular interest because it speaks to the sexual temptation in media, watching of “sexual things” is suggestive of sexually explicit material which in turn he practices with his wife.

Sipho has inspirational videos and messages posted on multiple media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook. I asked him what influence he hopes to have and what that influence would look like. He responded as follows:

*“...And then you have the grown-up ones, years later. Umuntu azokutshela ukut mfundisi (someone tell you, pastor), I grew up watching you and you have been influencing me, quite a lot and then you realised that there are people that you are mentoring that you do not know.” (Sipho, Individual interview, 4 April 2023)*

In this context he also brings in the complexities of religion and culture, how it has influenced his life and how he navigates this landscape as an older brother in a traditional Zulu family that practices cultural ritual.

*“Manhood is tough...in Africa it’s tough also in the sense that as an African man and ubhuti omdala ekhaya (older brother at home), when you go back to culture. To always have to explain yourself, to face discrimination eth I (that says) ‘You forsook us for the white man’s religion, you forsook amadlozi (ancestors) and uBaba mayeshona cos uwena ubhuti omdala, ubani ozokhuluma laykhaya (if our father dies, who is going to speak on our behalf)?’ You know, yah so...” (Sipho, Individual interview, 4 April 2023)*

Sipho touches on two things that he navigates as a born-again man. Firstly, discrimination from his own family for “forsaking them” for a white man’s religion, which adds to his struggles as an African black man within a cultural family and society and having to justify his religious identity. He also negotiates his position as a born-again man within his immediate environment. Secondly, as an older brother he is expected to become the family’s spokesperson to the ancestors when his father passes on, but now he cannot do that because his religious traditions and beliefs no longer allow him to practice that cultural ritual of speaking to the ancestors. There is clearly a collapse between cultural and religious systems because he cannot serve the one without losing his position in the other. I then proceeded to ask how he navigated these cultural and religious expectations of him as a man.

*“Well, you continue in a thing owayoqala kuyona usamncane ukut (that thing you started while you were still you) you are there for them, you help them kodwa kuyakusiza nawe (they also help you) to get exposed to their culture to learn how to navigate. For example, as ubhiti omdala ekhaya, mm isizulu siyangivumela ukut if I’m not willing to take over kubaba, siyangivumela to hand over to my brother ongilamayo (as an older brother, the Zulu culture allows me if I’m not willing to take over from my father to hand over to my younger brother), so if you come to them with that knowledge, usubashaye entweni yabo (you beat them). If you don’t know the system uvesane ubaleke nokusindiswa kuphela, you will find yourself in the corner from time to time.” (Sipho, Individual interview, 4 April 2023)*

This is how he negotiates his identity as a born-again man – sometimes it means losing your position as an older brother culturally but still maintaining your identity within the cultural system.

**R: What is that one thing that makes you vulnerable as father, brother, uncle, pastor?**

*“I will tell you though, that my experience as a priest, counsellor and also as somebody who is married, that abantu besilise (men) in marriage are suffering a lot in silence and you hear when men are sitting together, you hear when men sebezuzile..bese ziyaphume (when they are drunk, they talk) and then uzobezwa ngeke esathi umkhami ‘lomfazi lo’ (they will say ‘this woman’), you see they are*

*carrying such anger and hot emotions towards their wives because behind closed doors...*

*... amadoda anamhlanje awasafani nawakuqalo lakhona (men of today are not like those who lived before us) the women ebebasaba futhi bengahlali nabo (the women were afraid of them and didn't live with them), cos behlala egoli emayini. Thina sihlala nabo, 24/7, ugcina esekujwayela umuntu. Maniqala ukihlangani ukubiza ngobaba wasekhaya ugcina usuwu (We who stay with them, they become comfortable, when we first met, she would call me father<sup>19</sup> but now they call you 'you').” (Sipho, Individual interview, 4 April 2023)*

Sipho is reflecting on his own personal experience, that within his marriage, he felt less of a man because he was not respected enough or the way that he expected. Drawing on the aspect that men previously never stayed with their wives because they were working in the mine, their wives respected them more than the modern-day man is respected. He also touches on the mental health aspects of many men who are in the same situation as him. The anger, the frustration, and the hate many carry due to unpleasant experiences in their own marriages.

This interview happened to be during a time where I was also feeling unappreciated within my own marriage. I did a diary entry on 9 April 2023, five days later:

*I feel like I do not receive the respect I deserve from my partner, not only as the husband and father but also a leader in my own home. She even refers to the house we are building as “her house” ... not ours? How am I to feel?*

Babakhe is a thirty-three-year-old man, who resides between two places – Sweetwaters and Hilton. The interview took place in a fast-food restaurant. Although a bit noisy, the environment was ideal because of his busy work and church schedule. It was an easy-going interview and the conversation flowed well. It could be one of two things – firstly, he was comfortable around me and I with him, so we rode on that wave of comfortability. Secondly, the environment and the conversation we had about his new relationship eased the anxiety and tension.

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<sup>19</sup> Father not in the sense of father and child relationship. Calling your husband as “uBaba” is a sign of respect within the Zulu culture.

**R: According to you own understanding, what does it mean to be a man?**

*“Sho...(laughter). Being a man for me. My description comes from Christ where I identify a man as someone who takes lead, who’s a provider and protector, those for men are the main three things. At church you lead and at home you are the head of the family but in the society. It’s going to be the same where that person carries themselves, people are able to follow. That would be the leadership aspects of a man. Provider, mainly around family, and being able to be someone who provides but also in the society as someone who contributes in the way that they chose to make other decisions, they are providing certain thing to society. Protection in every way, first being the family, I think that they protect but in the gospel sense of things it would protecting the gospel.” (Babakhe, Individual interview, 9 March 2023)*

Being a man is based on three things: being a leader, provider, and protector. He comes to this understanding of manhood through this description that comes from Christ. For a man who is a father, these three aspects are important for him because it defines who he is as a man. He further explains what these characteristics entail. It is framed within a heteropatriarchal system of manhood and the meaning of masculinity.

**R: How has faith and culture influenced your manhood?**

*“I think this can be looked in both and negative way but for me is on the positive side against what the world things. Being a man in Christ also allowed me to have an understanding that I have a safe heaven, a place where I can express my emotions, I can actually call out to someone, because obviously manhood in most cases means I am able to do everything for myself and I don’t cry...I am going to rely to God emotionally where I need too, see him as a person who takes lead rather seeing myself as a leader. I feel like that’s how it has influenced me to be a man where it brought me to be in touch with my humanity rather than fight to be muscular in spaces where I shouldn’t be.” (Babakhe, Individual interview, 9 March 2023)*

Faith/religion seemed to have positively influenced his life in that he became aware of his feminine side, the emotional side that a man is discouraged from embodying due to cultural norms of manhood. It is through his faith that he can embody vulnerability by being able to cry. Through his faith he can get in touch with his humanity before being a man and doesn't fight to be muscular when he doesn't have to be.

*“Culture in my experiences because of the circles that I have been it have been different, growing up we are introduced to the chore and that kind of things. There are times where you are surrounded by certain man, and you want to come across the same as they are but deep down there has been a conviction for me to understand that not what really a man is by showing the muscular side if things only.” (Babakhe, Individual interview, 9 March 2023)*

Babakhe touches on an important aspect of male bonding within a cultural context, where men bond over their experiences of masculinity and what it means to be a man. Men like him often conform or become complicit in their masculinity so that they are “one of the guys”. The constant negotiation of one's masculine identity within a social setting to gain affirmation and inclusion.

**R: What does it mean to be born again?**

*“It means denying all that I have identified myself as before I took Christi as my Lord and saviour, now identifying myself with how He sees me and how He had really intended my life to, becoming all that He created me to be. Being born again for me simply means following that pattern of his will rather what my will has always been.” (Babakhe, Individual interview, 9 March 2023)*

Being born-again means to deny yourself and all that you have identified yourself as before coming to the knowledge of Christ. You now identify yourself according to how Christ sees you and following his will. To follow up, I asked him what things he denied himself.

*“Mm...some of them are denial in mind but the body still isn't there. But you know that fact that my identity before, my manhood can be seen as a man with a lot of women and that how I had identified myself as a man verse being born-again where*

*I understand the principle of God where I commit to one woman, so then it would be an example of denying that part.” (Babakhe, Individual interview, 9 March 2023)*

This extract contains two loaded statements. One, the denial in his mind but the body not being there yet says very little but also a lot of things at the same time. The mind and the body are often in conflict because now, the flesh (body) wants what it wants, e.g. sensual pleasure, but because now one is born again, such behaviour is not to be entertained. Secondly, he was a man with many women in his life and his manhood was defined by that, but now through Christ he understands the principle of being committed to one woman. This behavioural change is attributed to his religious identity as a born-again man.

**R: How has media influenced how you view yourself as a man?**

*“I think media has. In most cases it places you in space where you feel inadequate in terms of. You know what one can do, and it makes you feel you have not missed an inch because most of the life presented there is young men that have already attained this and that and have made it in this particular thing.” (Babakhe, Individual interview, 9 March 2023)*

Media is often a social representation of reality and often reflects on our lived realities. It evokes a lot of emotions and sometimes makes one question yourself and where you are in life and whether you have achieved all you wanted to. I followed up with the following question: **Is your masculinity presented in the media?**

*“I wouldn’t say completely not but certainly a percentage that is high has a bad idea of what a man should see himself. It’s a small percentage that presents the actual true reflection of what a man should be or who a man should be, I don’t think the media does a great job of that. Cos you exposed to stories where a man has done certain things and man didn’t protect or provide.” (Babakhe, Individual interview, 9 March 2023)*

Media has represented masculinity and manhood in a negative light; it does not show the true reflection of everyday lived realities of men and what men should be. Men are often portrayed in a negative light. I further asked him what ideal of masculinity he would like to see represented in the media:

*“Media has also not presented a great picture of fathers who care and who play a role in their children’s lives and being great examples in the society. Media always presents abusive fathers who are drunkards. How do you inspire people when you are always showing negative stuff?” (Babakhe, Individual interview, 9 March 2023)*

It is time to change the narrative being represented in media regarding fatherhood and positive presentations of fathers who are involved in their children’s lives to create great examples within society.

**R: As a father, what is that one thing that has made you feel less of a man?**

*“So...not being able to provide the way I would want to. Because I think when we are raised in family, we grow up with a whole lot that we want to achieve for our families and not being able to have the means to provide the way I want in the past has made one feel like I’m not man enough because I can’t do this and that.” (Babakhe, Individual interview, 9 March 2023)*

The ability to provide as a father or a man affirms your manhood and masculinity. It is a validation that you are doing what is expected of you as a man. Not being able to provide makes one feel not manly enough because you cannot perform this task.

The interview ended with us just talking about fatherhood and the struggles we go through not only as men of faith but also as fathers and how our children make us vulnerable.

Tshepo has an outgoing personality, very warm and friendly. He is a youth leader within his local church. The interview happened online due to work commitments and was recorded for quality assurance purposes. The interview was 30 minutes long and many interesting things came out of our discussion. One of the interesting things he disclosed, although not in detail, is his attraction to both men and women and how the congregation has been asking questions as to when he is getting married. The interview took place on 20 March 2023.

**R: According to your understanding, what does it mean to be a man?**

*“To be a man, kukhona isisho sezizulu esithi Ubudoda abukhulelwa (there’s a Zulu saying, ‘Being a man is not determined by age’), it’s based on the responsibilities*

*and your behaviour, what the community expects of you as a man and your behaviour, well gender wise, classifications. That's what the society expects.”*  
(Tshepo, Individual interview, 20 March 2023)

To be a man is not determined by age, which means a person as young as 21 can be considered a man based on his ability to fulfil his responsibility according to social norms. Responsibility is an embodiment of masculinity or manhood.

**R: How has faith and culture influenced your manhood?**

*“In my faith life, I don't want to lie about it, it's very much challenging. Point number one, as a man, being a Christian and especially of my age, Christians around seems to have questions about a Christian who is not dating, and they end up having assumptions because they have their own expectations. Sometimes you end being discriminated in the family and society because of the lifestyle you chose.”* (Tshepo, Individual interview, 20 March 2023)

Dating is not allowed for a Christian man, unless it is for the purpose of marriage. Being unmarried at the age of forty, people start asking questions because you are expected to have your own family at this stage, let alone a child. Being a man of faith also exposes you to a lot of discrimination from your immediate environment because of the life you chose.

**R: You speak of being discriminated against by family and society based on the lifestyle you chose; what are some those lifestyle changes that you have made?**

*“Being a born-again, you don't do these things of dating, do not partake in ancestral worship. If you do not part take in these things and not dating, no child, so now, how is your life really? Because culturally most of the times, this thing of Christianity is a woman thing hey... that's how I would describe it, being discriminated in that manner. And they end sometimes saying you are somehow feminine, that feminism is part of to. They sometimes group you under, that maybe you are gay or whatever.”*  
(Tshepo, Individual interview, 20 March 2023)

The lifestyle changes people make based on their religious identity and faith traditions forbid them from taking part in cultural rituals such as ancestral worship. This practice is sacred to the Nguni culture and practiced by many Nguni families. Being a born-again man is also associated with femininity, so men get discriminated against on this embodiment of their femininity to a point where they are considered as gay. An adult born-again man who is not dating and who does not have children is considered feminine, and their sexual identity comes into question.

**R: In your everyday life, what is that one thing that has made you feel less of a man?**

*“Before, it was this thing of being approached by men. So now it’s this thing of being attracted to men and females, sometime, yes. And the other thing is that as I stated before, is that maybe when abazalwane (believers) as why aren’t you married at this age, you know. That thing on its own, I don’t what to lie to you it has an impact... because now, alright fyn. Ngempela ngemple angishadile ngani (why am I not married)? On the other hand, you got those mixed feelings, you understand. So mmm when someone asks you awushaduile ngani (are you not interested in women)? Really? Are those the only things that would make you not want to get married. So now you simply say to you self, if lomuntu engubuka ababoni ukut ubuka indoda la? I don’t know if you get me well lapho.” (Tshepo, Individual interview, 20 March 2023)*

Sexual identity for Tshepo is one of the things that makes him vulnerable. Being bisexual and born-again makes it even harder for him as a man, because there is this added expectation that he should marry a woman and have a family.

**Researcher’s reflection: 22 March 2023**

*“..my sexuality has always been questioned not only by my peers at the time but also my family. I vividly remember my aunt saying they did not expectation any child from me because I was masculine presenting. It did not help that I was a very handsome young boy, yes, I was!! Point is, it was always assumed that I was gay because I did not have a girlfriend until I was in grade 10. I was sensitive, feminine, didn’t engage in your typical “boy fights” ect.*

*When I became born -again, it became worse, not only did I not have a girlfriend, but I was also saved.”*

Bhut'Omdala is a 26-year-old single male who resides with his family in Mooi River. He is the oldest man within his immediate family and when his father passed, he became the head of the family. For him, that meant that he had a lot of responsibilities. Currently, he works for the church to support himself and his family. The conversation with him was a bit tense at the beginning but flowed as the interview proceeded. The interview was done via Zoom meetings on 8 March 2023, and it was recorded and transcribed.

**R: According to your own understanding, what does it mean to be a man?**

*“From where I am or from where I’m coming from, a man is supposed to be the head of the house. Being the head of the house means you have to make decisions for the family, you have to provide for the family, and you have brought direction to the family, stuff like that. The challenge would be if you do not have the employment or the power to provide or to give wisdom or something like that. It means you are not a man.” (Bhut'Omdala, Individual interview, 8 March 2023)*

A man is supposed to be the head, the provider and decision maker, and bring direction to the family and for the family. However, all of this is threatened when his ability to provide is hindered by unemployment. He is no longer considered a man. To find out more about his own lived reality as it relates to employment, I asked him if he was employed.

*“Mm... for me, I would say I am employed but the situation becomes on how much are you earning, how much are you earning. They judge you on what you put on the table. So, if it’s not enough to cover the whole family, then you are not that important, it becomes an issue.” (Bhut'Omdala, Individual interview, 8 March 2023)*

The remuneration or the salary you get also determines how the family treats you as the provider. You are judged by how much you bring to the table; it must be enough to cover all the needs of the family. If you do not earn enough to cover the needs of the family, your role is compromised and becomes an issue. It is no longer about being the provider, but about the extent to which you are providing.

**R: How has faith and culture influenced your manhood?**

*“Mm...faith wise, I grew up in a very cultural family. So, you find those who are Christian and those who are non-Christian, believers and non-believers who will do traditional things like ancestral worship and stuff like that. For me that brought some confusion because there is mixed culture in the family. Everyone would tell you have to do this, and another would tell you this. So, you grow up confused as to where you fall into.” (Bhut’Omdala, Individual interview, 8 March 2023)*

**R: What does it mean to a born-again man?**

*“To me, kuchaza ukut (it means that), as I was being saved from all those confusion, it means I have to repeat those things, because I was ignorant but now I have understanding of what was happening, so as I was saying, I must change my way and be the light to other people and help them understand what it means to be born again.” (Bhut’Omdala, Individual interview, 8 March 2023)*

*“So, I would say to follow Christ as much as I can, and to do his will as the child of God.” (Bhut’Omdala, Individual interview, 8 March 2023)*

The above extract illuminates the conflict or confusion between faith and culture, which seems to be in conflict because of different belief systems and practices. Being born-again saved him from this confusion, because now he has a better understanding of the different practices of Christianity and culture as they relate to traditional rituals such as ancestral worship.

**R: As a born-again man, what differentiates you from a non-born-again man?**

*“Mm...kuningi (there is a lot), let’s say as I come from my community, iyouth yakhona (the youth) you can see ukut (that) they are busy doing worldly things like going to clubs, being womanisers if I may put it like that, smoking and stuff like that.” (Bhut’Omdala, Individual interview, 8 March 2023)*

The behavioural changes that come with being born-again are that worldly behaviour such as clubbing, womanising, and smoking, amongst other things, should not be found in you. This behavioural change is in a way a public declaration that you are now born-again, and you no longer engage in such behaviour because of your faith traditions and beliefs.

**R: How has social media influenced how you view yourself as a man?**

*“Social media would tell you a lot of things...sometimes it will pop up something you don't really want to see because you still growing up and not married, so yah it really has any perspective. My thing is associate yourself with believers, that has kept me alive, mm because you will be closer to people who speak life to you and mentor you along the walk of the church. As much there is lot of noise in social media but there's also people who are guiding you in the right direction, you can used social media to be mentored.” (Bhut'Omdala, Individual interview, 8 March 2023)*

Engagement with social media is two-fold in this extract. Firstly, the things that pop up on social media that one may not want to see because they are “not married” is open to different interpretations. The “not married” part in this instance insinuates something of a sexual nature or something that may create a sexual desire in a young man who is single and not allowed to date due to religious beliefs. Secondly, something that one can control in their engagement with social media is who they choose to associate with. In this instance he uses social media to connect with fellow believers, so he uses social media to be mentored.

**R: How do you balance what tradition expects of you and what the church expects of you as a man?**

*“Culturally, I'm expected to be a leader in the house and stand my ground, bringing direction and helping them because I am the oldest to take the responsibility. So that puts pressure on me. The church expects you to be holy, walk as holy as possible, to not make mistakes. Like you have to be holy because we are covered by the cult of witnesses, everyone is watching including your family. Mm...as the Bible says, they are watching, the things that you do, you must explain to the believers so that they*

*not stop coming to church, it's quite challenging. As a guy I have people who are guiding me along the journey.” (Bhut'Omdala, Individual interview, 8 March 2023)*

**R: What are the challenges of living up to these expectations?**

*“Mm...would be to the physical part of things, as the guy who still not married, you must look hard for a person, which is hard these days otherwise, you must look for advice. The challenge for me would be finding the wright person and the leadership position, ukut (that) what you do counts and what you say matters. People can take what you literally even if you say something figuratively and being also accountable to yourself.” (Bhut'Omdala, Individual interview, 8 March 2023)*

Religio-cultural expectations in terms of manhood are quite different. On one hand, culture expects a man to be the leader of the house and take responsibility of the household, whereas the church expects you to be holy and without sin and does not afford you room to make mistakes. The pressure you are under as a born-again man to live morally upright is immense, not only from your own family but also the community you are part of. Sense of individuality does not exist because you are constantly living up to different expectations. The expectation of sexual purity is challenging – the flesh (physical) wants what it wants, but because of the religious identity you have chosen, you must abstain until you get married to meet those physical needs.

The interview ended with a very personal question from Bhut'Omdala, which took me by surprise. He asked, “How do you navigate being a leader in your own home and life?” He asked this question based on the difficulties he has faced in his own life. I responded by saying I delegate things that I cannot do. Having reflected on it, I realised that “delegating” was a poor word choice. In my reflection diary dated 8 March 2023 I wrote:

*“I guess I used it to sound authoritative or give off the impression that I am an authoritative figure in my home, I actually not... Yes, culturally and traditionally, as a leader I am expected to be the authority, but the current context does not allow for such 'dictatorship' to flourish in the home. Being a leader is never easy, sometimes*

*your feeling and happiness come last. All that matters is doing what is supposed to be done without question or complaint”.*

Fox is a young man hailing from Impendle. He’s been involved in missionary work across Africa and currently works for a faith-based organisation. Our engagement was quite interesting and different from the others because he did not have any major life experiences outside of his faith, and the conversation often referred to religious life, beliefs and practices. The interview was conducted on 28 February 2023.

**R: In your own understanding, what does it mean to be a man?**

*“Indoda or ukuba indoda umuntu olindekeli ukuthi enze ama task athize, mmm mangithi amatask athize, in terms of thinking. So, there is a difference between umfana nendoda. Umfana ucabanga ngendlela yobuncane kodwa indoda, icabanga about ikusasa, ukuthi iziphi izinto ezilindeleke kuyena njengondoda okumele azanze interm of ifameli, community or noma ilaphi la aleader khona. Kumele akhombise uhlobo lwe leadership, so for me indoda umuntu onomqondo wokeakha because part of indoda ukwakha, onomqondo wokucorrector makudinga ukucorrector so thatizinto zizokwazi ukuhamba ngohlelo.”*

*(A man is someone who is expected to perform certain tasks, when I say tasks, in terms of thinking. A boy thinks like a young boy, but a man thinks about the future, thinks about the things that are expected of him as a man in terms of family, community it wherever it is where he leads. For men, a man is someone who has building mentality because part of being a man is building. Someone who has a will to correct whenever the need arises so that things will happen accordingly). (Fox, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

His understanding of manhood is through tasks that a man must perform. His distinction of being a boy and a man is interesting. A boy thinks like a child and does not think about the future, nor does he plan. A man, on the other hand, thinks about the future because he is a leader and has a building mentality.

**R: How has faith and culture influenced your manhood?**

*“Mm...kunjima kakhuku because, you find ukut emkahaya sikhuliswa ngezinto ezizusiko, kokhona izinto ezinhle esizulwini ezikwazi ukut zisikhulise sibe amadado in terms of taking responsibilities but when it comes to ukukholwa usuhluka nalento abayenzayo its difficult because you are battling nomdeni ngendlela ekukhulise ngayo, only to find ukuthi nawe usuthole okunye ukut you know what this is my hope of into engiyibona incono for mini. Kuphoqeleka ukut uthathe isinqume ukuze uhluke kulento abayenzayo. At the end of the day, singasho sithi indaba isesinqumeni njjengoba sikhuluma ngendoda, I responsibility iqala lapho ukut you know what, kulezinto ngistander firm kuzona because iyonanto engikholela kuyona.”*

*(It is very difficult to, because you find that we were brought up with cultural practices, there are good things in culture that can mould us into men in terms of taking responsibility but when you become saved, you differ with their practices. It's difficult because you are battling with the family in terms of how they brought you up, only to find out that you have also what's better for you. It is important that you make a decision so that you differ with what they are doing. At the end of the day, we can say that a man makes a decision as a man, that is where the responsibility starts, standing firm on some things because it is what I believe in.) (Fox, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

There seems to be confusion or conflict when it comes to culture. Culture moulds us into the men we are in terms of taking responsibility. But when you are saved/born-again, you no longer subscribe to the cultural practices that you have known your adult life, such as ancestral worship and other rituals. In this instance, you must take a stand in terms of your beliefs, even if it means going against the family. To follow up on the positive or good things about culture, I asked him what the positive things are that we learn from culture.

*“Kunenhlonipho ekhona esizulwini obonayo ukut into enhle le... for example, uma umile endlini, kithiwa musa ukutwala indu so kumele ukhumule isiqgqoko ukukhombisa irect. Ilezinto ezincane nje eziyizifundiso ezisilelayo ukuba indoda.”*  
*(There is respect that it teaches you... if you are standing in the house, it tells you must not stand in the house, you take off your hat as a sign of respect. It's those little*

*things that it teaches you how to be a man.) (Fox, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

The only good or positive thing that culture taught him was respect. It is interesting that he mentions that one thing. It could be that at his young age he has not had many positive experiences.

**R: What does it mean to be a born-again man?**

*“Ngaleyoy confession ilapho khona usuqala ukuadapter kuleculture le entsha yokuphile. Kunezinto ezithize engingeke ngizenze ukuze abanti babone ukut lento esengiyithatile is different kunale abacabanga ukut iyona or indlela abaphila ngoyo. There’s a certain life ekumele sisivexa kubanti, especially lana abangakholwa.*

*(...With that confession, that is when you start adopting a new culture of life. There are things that I will not do so that people seen that this thing has life and is very different from why they think it is or their own lives. There’s a certain life that we must show people, especially those who are not saved.) (Fox, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

Being born-again starts with a confession of faith. That confession symbolises the beginning of a new life and culture of living. There are certain things you do not do, or you abstain from, because you are now leading a different life compared to those who are not saved.

**R: What is this new culture and what lifestyle changes have you made?**

*“For mina, kwakumele ngiyeyeke ukukhonza amadlozi, asisenayo lento yokuthi kumele kuoxoliselwa bani. Utswala, izwi liyasistela ukut sibalekelani nokudakwayo, umjolo, mawusindisiwe awujoli. Uexpecte ke ukut uphile ngendlela ethe ukuhluka.” (For me, I have to stop ancestral worship, I don’t have that things where I have to appease for someone else. Alcohol, the word tells us that we must stay away from becoming drunkards, dating, if you are saved, you do not date. You are expected to live differently from other people.) (Fox, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

The lifestyle of a born-again man is different to that of a man that is not born-again. According to doctrinal beliefs, one must not worship ancestors, not consume alcohol and not date.

**R: What is that one thing that has made you feel like less of a man?**

*“[Long pause]...Into ebe ichallenge, egcine uzikweshinaor ekunikezela inselele. Sisindisiwe sisebasha, ilento le yokuthi...siyabona engathi niyizitabane bafana asisaboni ngisho nanentombi eyodwa, leyo iyachallanger ngoba ugcina uziququestioner ukut abangiboni yini ngiyindoda ephelele? Kuba khonaleyonto emesane ithi, angibe nentombi khona bazobona ukut ngiwumfana ngempela.”*

*(The challenge, that makes you question yourself. We are saved and still young, it’s the thing of...we can see that maybe you are homosexual boys; we don’t even see you with a girlfriend, that makes you wonder whether they don’t see that you are a full man. Then there is that thing that say, get a girlfriend so that they can see that you are truly a man.) (Fox, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

*“Ngike mgakhuluma nabantu abaningi ngalento...” (I have spoken to so many people about this...) (Fox, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

*“Nasemakhaya ethu...into ehlizi ngibuzwa yona, kuthiwa ngoba abafoweni bafika netembi, kungani wena ungafiki nayo? Buka osbanibani banexingane ezingaka wena awunazo? Unentobi ezingaki wena awunayo ngisho neyodwa?” (Even at home, I’m always asked where my girlfriend is because my brothers always come home with theirs. See these guys have so many kids, where is yours. They have so many girlfriends, you don’t have even one.) (Fox, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

Not being able to date as a born-again man brings your sexuality into question, because it is believed that a young man should have a girlfriend. Being called homosexual creates discomfort to the point where one would want to date and have a girlfriend just to prove that you are a man. Manhood or masculinity in this regard is policed by community or society that expects young men to behave in a certain way, but because of their faith, they do not date. The solution to proving you are truly a man seems to be to get a girlfriend, have sex, and reproduce.

**R: How do you navigate your faith and meeting those social masculine expectations of manhood?**

*“Having someone to mentor you, I think neny into ekwazi ukusigcina ukwazi amavalues akho njengomuntu, uhamba ugcinephi.” (... another thing that keeps us is your values as a person, your boundaries.) (Fox, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

Having a mentor to guide you in life and keeping your boundaries and your values intact as you navigate masculinity and the cultural expectations. I pushed further by asking what is expected of you as a born-again man because I felt this was a very superficial response without any depth to it; something was missing.

*“eyokuqala, kumele ube accountable njengendoda, yabona into enjalo. Uzokwazi uku accouter kukulunkulu njengoHloko, uyakwazi ukut operater kahle. Ibhayilele liyasho ukut isitha sishaya umalusi, lishaye ikhandaukuze ungakwazi ukuoperater kahle ngoba kanaleyonto yokuthi ayikho iaccountability between indoda noNkulunkulu.” (Firstly, you have to be accountable as a man. You are accountable to God as a head, once you are accountable, you can operate appropriately. The Bible says the enemy attached the leader, attached the head so that they are not operational because there is no accountability between a man and God.) (Fox, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

*“Kulindeleke ukut ube nothando njengondoda ekholwayo. Indoda engenalo uthando angicabangi ukut inayo lento yokwakha. I think even mentors need love to be patient with us ngoba siyahlupha sinabazalwane. Uthando Ilona olisibekela yonke into.” (It is expected that you have love as a born-again man. A man who does not love does not have that sense of building something. Love covers everything.) (Fox, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

*“Ukunakekela njengendoda. Sithole ama incidents amaningi ngelockdown where abantu be divorcer because abakwazi ukuhlalelana nabantu ababashadile. Nonokuthi isikine asikho.” (Being a caretaker as a man. We found many incidents*

*during lockdown where couples were divorcing because they no longer put up with each other and that there is not patience.) (Fox, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

As a born-again man, you are supposed to be accountable to God; you must have and express love as a man and a caretaker and must have patience to endure all. It is interesting that he only mentions the divorce rate during the pandemic but does not mention the sister pandemic that co-existed with Covid-19: gender-based violence.

Aphelele is a thirty-one-year-old man who is married, has two children, and is an active member of the church. Our conversation was quite interesting. It was very “Christian” in that his responses revolved around his Pentecostal faith and how that has shaped him. It did not feel like I was talking to a man who converted to Pentecostalism and became born-again but rather to a man whose identity and meaning are centred around his doctrinal beliefs. For lack of a better expression, I would use Lady Gaga’s famous queer-affirmative song “Born this way”. As a result, I could not really get a sense of who he is outside of his faith. He also expressed that he did not have any media engagement whatsoever, therefore media-related issues were not addressed during this interview. The interview was done on 22 March 2023.

**R: According to your own understanding, what does it mean to be a man?**

*“First of all, for me being a man is from the creation of God because the first thing that you see you are a man is what differentiates you from a woman which means your body parts, that’s the first that gives meaning to a man. As you grow up you learn what I would say, standards that men are supposed to uphold. Some say uyindonda ngeminsebenzi (you are a man through works). In one simple’s definition I wouldn’t give you because there are so many attributes that construct that definition. So, I would say, your physical body parts, role you play in society and the standards that you uphold as a man.” (Aphelele, Individual interview, 22 March 2023)*

He understands masculinity from a biblical perspective, where God created a man and out of a man, He formed a woman. He unpacks the hierarchical gender order from a biblical

perspective. A man is defined by having a penis and there are standards that a man must uphold. Being a man is also determined by the role you play in society.

**R: What are the attributes that you are referring to?**

*“First attribute you are responsible, you are a leader, you are, I would say you portray a protective role with the people assigned to your care as a man.” (Aphelele, Individual interview, 22 March 2023)*

**R: How has faith and culture influenced your manhood?**

*“Both these terms, faith, and culture, they exist differently but there is some sort of link that links them together to bring up a person, especially a person of faith. There are cultural norms that one adopts as they are growing up, growing without being a believer for example then you reach a stage where you accept Christ as Lord and Savior, some of those cultural norms do not go away, they become part of you but still being an honest believer if I may put it that way. If I may make a silly example, we grew up in a society where a man would not be able to address other men without wearing a coat and when we came to church, accepted Christi, addressing the believers without wearing a coat was a sign of disrespect, was a sign of not being a dedicated believer. So, you see some of the cultural norms as we practice as Christians or as believers.” (Aphelele, Individual interview, 22 March 2023)*

*“The person that I AM today is a result of the upbringing that I got both culturally and spiritually. Also due to whatever things that happened in my life, those moulded me to be the person that I am today.” (Aphelele, Individual interview, 22 March 2023)*

Culture and faith exist at polar ends, but they are also linked to each other and the influence they have on identity construction is something that cannot be ignored. As a man of faith, cultural norms do not apply to you, however, both culture and faith teaches us respect as universal that everyone one must embody.

**R: As a born-again man, how do you balance what tradition expects of you and what the church expects of you as a man?**

*“As a born-again Christian, I do not consider myself as a cultural or traditional man because there are no cultural norms that applies to me. I live by faith and faith standards. That is, I’m a pure child of God, so my navigation in that life is simple. I have the spirit of God that is helping navigate through all the activities that are required of me. Also, I have people that have lived before me, like mentors to be quite precise, that are also give advice on how to navigate especially on new adventures. New adventure that come across in life without any knowledge on how to navigate thought those adventure, but you get council from people older people that you, people who have walked the walk, talked the talk and they really give that sort of council, so you at least know what to expect in the new journey you are taking. So, in that sense, the spirit of God assists me in all these activities and the council I’m getting from older people that have lived the life.” (Aphelele, Individual interview, 22 March 2023)*

Once you are Christian and born-again, cultural things no longer apply to you. Your faith and the help of the Holy Spirit helps you navigate the complexity of life and manhood. Having a mentor to guide you through life also helps you navigate the cultural and religious expectations of manhood.

Themba goes to the same church as Fox, and they also work together for a faith-based organisation. The interview was also done on 28 February 2023. He was excited about conversations even though he is a man of few words. Having lived for 32 years, his entire adult life has been dedicated to Christianity and serving the Lord. His ideas about manhood were similar to Fox’s ideas, but this was to be expected, given the immediate environment that they share. For this interview, I will share an extract from the religion and culture questions and a media-related question.

**R: How has your faith and culture influenced your manhood?**

*“Yho... amasiko. Kunzima, for mina akubanga lula cosukukhulela emdenini ohlabayo owenxa xonke izinto zesizulu, noma kungabanga nzima kakhulu ngoba*

*ngikhule noMA,, nawe mawukhula kunezinto ozithathayo ezishiwo umzali nezishiwo undenu. Kufika khona isikhatha lakumele udecider ukut uthatha loku okushiwo umzali or okushiwo umdeni. Cos nawo una amopnions awao...masusukhulule usyindoda laykhaya kumele siyeseze kanje kanje, sokumele ngikhethe ukut ikuphi enghihambiselana nako.” (Culture. It is difficult for me; it has not been easy because I grew up in a home that practiced cultural things. When you grow up there are things your family or your parent says that you take to heart. There comes a time where you have to decide whether you take what your parent say and what your family say... they give you their own opinions... when you are older and a man, in this house, this is how we do things, then you decide whether you accept it or not.) (Themba, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

There is conflict when one becomes born-again because now you have to go against what you have been taught your entire life; you live a life where you do not perform cultural or traditional family rituals.

**R: How has media influenced how you view yourself as a man?**

*“Social media unezilingo eziningi (has a lot of temptations). For example, Facebook, you are trying to avoid temptation, but you are always exposed to semi-naked women... so ya kunezilingo ezining (there are lot of things). Futhi sekulula ukut uthole umuntu wesifazane akushele (it is even easier for women to ask you out), it’s not like before. Kubanzima kakhulu uma bazi ukut umuntu wesilisa usindisiwe (it is even more difficult when she knows that you a man who is saved or born-again).” (Themba, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

The temptation found in social media includes images of half-naked women. So, as a born-again man you cannot expose yourself to such things because they might lead you astray. It gets more complicated when women start asking you out. The ideological belief that dating will eventually lead to sex has prevented young men from exploring any romantic relationship.

**R: What is that one thing that has made you feel like less of a man?**

*“Ukuthi ubudoda buya kumele ubumela. Ngenza yokubaleka ukubizwa ngestabeni, ugciba usushada prematurely kungakabi isikhathi ngenxa yokuthi...ipressure yokuthu kumele ube yindoda.” (That I have to affirm my manhood. I’m trying to run away from being called gay, you end up getting married before your time...the pressure of being a man.) (Themba, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

The homophobia of being perceived as homosexual makes him vulnerable to a point where he is willing to marry just to affirm his manhood.<sup>20</sup>

**R: How do you navigate your faith and meeting those social pressures of manhood?**

*“Ay.ukuthandaza, firstly nje ukuithandaza. I think if umuntukumele kube khona umuntu ohlezi uconsulter kuyena, cos somethime ugcina usuwenza izinqumo ezingeke zikuyise emphomelelweni ngenxa yokuthi uzithathele izinqumo uwedwa.” (Prayer, firstly, its prayer. A person has to have someone who they consult with because sometimes you end up making decision that won’t make you move forward in life because of the decision you took on your own.) (Aphelele, Individual interview, 22 March 2023)*

Prayer assists you to navigate the social pressure of manhood, as does having someone to consult, a mentor to make you see perspective. One can’t help but wonder about the practical aspect of this situation – what if your mentor is not available?

Ntando is a very energetic and vibrant young man who is the older of four children whose father is a pastor. At the time of the interview, he was in another province for study purposes, therefore the interview was held via Zoom meetings. His take on masculinity is informed by his upbringing as a pastor’s child and his experiences growing up within the church and socially. He is very outspoken, and his alternative view of masculinity is refreshing. In his

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<sup>20</sup> I used homophobia to refer to fear of the men unmasking us, emasculating us, reveal to us and the world we don’t measure up, that we are not real. Kimmel, M.S., 2013. Masculinity as homophobia: Fear, shame, and silence in the construction of gender identity. In *Toward a new psychology of gender* (pp. 223-242). Routledge.

outspoken personality, he was anxious about giving the “right” answers and therefore did not elaborate much on his responses.

**R: According to your own understanding, what does it mean to be a man?**

*“Well, stereotypically a man is associated with power and not afraid of showing yourself who you are. A man is characterised by adventure, compromise for those who they love and are leaders.” (Ntando, Individual interview, 3 March 2023)*

A man is powerful and confident in his identity. He also puts those he loves first before his own needs.

**R: How has your faith and culture influenced your manhood?**

*“Faith and culture have influenced my manhood both positively and negatively. Negatively, church teaches how a man should be, the things a man should do and should not do and has their heights of toxic masculinity and that a man should not show his emotions. The positive influence is that we are taught that a man is a provider and protector. He takes care and look after his own, his role is to lead or be a leader.” (Ntando, Individual interview, 3 March 2023)*

Unlike other interviewees, Ntando touches on the toxic masculinity that exists in faith spaces which also dictate how men should act and conduct themselves. Men not showing their emotions may however lead to mental health issues, because they have no avenue in which they can express these emotions.

**R: What does it mean to be born again?**

*“It means finding grace that sustains you in your imperfections. Christ guides you, protects you and being able to take accountability for your actions and repent whenever you have sinned. You are basically a change of your way.” (Ntando, Individual interview, 3 March 2023)*

It means taking responsibility for your actions and adopting a new way of life.

**R: As a modern man who is exposed to all forms of media, how does media influence how you view yourself as a man?**

*“On that one, it boosts one’s self esteem – there are people you can influence easily and some not. I am always self-aware and have high self-esteem and not easily influenced by what I see. I’m always eager to learn about new thing. It’s a space of networking interactions. Society requires a certain type of man... I adapt whatever is needed at that time to have influence. It helps me to keep up with the times.”*

*(Ntando, Individual interview, 3 March 2023)*

He is somewhat of an influencer and is very self-aware and confident in who he is. Based on this extract, he is not easily influenced by what he is exposed to. Social media is a place of networking for him. He also ensures that he represents a particular type of masculinity that is required. I then proceeded to ask him if his ideal masculinity is represented in the media.

*“Yes, it is represented – every day we see examples of men of influence. With my faith traditions, no. It represents stereotypical ideals of man keeping up with old ideals of a man and fails to produce men of influence.”* *(Ntando, Individual interview, 3 March 2023)*

The clear distinction about media representations of masculinity is interesting. Socially, he feels he is represented, whereas his faith traditions do not represent his ideal masculinity and are disconnected from it. For a young man whose identity is tiered to his religious affiliation, he simply does not identify with the masculine ideology.

**R: In your everyday life, what has been that one thing that has made you feel like less of a man?**

*“[laughter] ...It should be a space where I’m intimidated or looked down upon. Space where you are unable to voice your concerns as a man, your ideal and feeling. Not given enough space to share your knowledge, you start questioning yourself.”*

*(Ntando, Individual interview, 3 March 2023)*

It is important for him to be in a place where his masculinity is affirmed and be seen for who he is. Not being given the opportunity to share makes him question who he is.

This interview was different from the others; there was not much talk about religious ideologies and restrictions in terms of him expressing himself. He is quite confident in who he is and his faith convictions.

Freedom is a self-proclaimed afro-centric photographer who also happens to be a social activist. He studies law but it is not clear whether he finished, because he currently works with an NGO for social empowerment. This interview took a very different direction that I did not expect it to take. One of the detours was his contention with his faith and not knowing where to place himself within the Christian faith landscape. The interview took place at his workplace on 3 April 2023.

**R: According to your own understanding, what does it mean to be a man?**

*“In my own understanding being a man, in fact concocted views of being is when you take unnecessary responsibility and shut things down. What do I mean by that? It feels weird for a woman to provide when you are in a date. It’s more like bruising your ego, but you don’t have, she has at that time. If she pays, I feel less of a man because we suffer from fragile masculinity. Being a man for me is being real, allowing yourself to be vulnerable. Infact being vulnerable is the strength on its own.”*  
(Freedom, Individual interview, 3 April 2023)

Being a man is being your authentic self and being able to be vulnerable. He also suggests that because a man might suffer from fragile masculinity, a woman paying her entire bill when you are on a date is emasculating.

**R: Assuming that a male figure takes responsibility, what does that responsibility look like for you?**

*“Provision, even if you can’t, even if the work suffocates you. Being a man is associated with provision and some will even phrase it from the Bible. Indoda izodla izithukukuthu zayo (a man enjoys their hard-earned labour) and nobody gets to question how did that come about. Provision is also limited, a man can provide a lot,*

*leadership, guidance, support but this is often overlooked by the provision of material things rather than of service.” (Freedom, Individual interview, 3 April 2023)*

Responsibility is associated with being a provider, but that provision is also limited to provision of material things rather than being present.

**R: How has your faith and culture influenced your manhood?**

*“Well, its bowl of contention when we speak about culture, faith, or religion. For me these brought what I call cognitive dissonance, what I believed in was... ohk cognitive dissonance is what you believe clashes or has a head on collision with the truth, the truth being, a whole lot of what is known to be religion is upside down, skewed. When I found out about this, I questioned everything. I’m not an African, I’m black. After being black ndingumxhisa (I am Xhosa) and there are cultural things that I need to stay true to.” (Freedom, Individual interview, 3 April 2023)*

*“Culture for me, I need to be true and honour where I come from, I need to represent the values I have been taught at home, I have a responsibility to contribute of the positive values that I have learned from home. Religion/faith on the other side is not true. I believed in the white Jesus, given the pictures that were depicted on every wall and church. I refer to the Bible as historical book. There’s a passage that says God is brown like Jaspers, I went and looked. Jaspers are black, brown stones like you and I. Religion has been a tool of the oppressor.” (Freedom, Individual interview, 3 April 2023)*

There is a lot to unpack in his responses. Firstly, he realised that all that he believed to be true about religion turned out to be a lie, making him question the concept of religion. Secondly, he takes pride in his identity as a black cultured man and is not willing to compromise on these cultural aspects that are important to him. As an activist, he views religion as oppressive.

**R: Do you believe in the doctrine of being born-again and what does that mean to you?**

*“No, being born-again means that you confess with your mouth that Jesus is lord, and then what? Automatically should I stop sinning?” (Freedom, Individual interview, 3 April 2023)*

According to him, he does not believe in being born again because of the lifestyle change that comes with the religious identity. This lifestyle is free of sin, and this is what he seems to have issues with.

**R: As an Afrocentric photographer, do you feel like your ideal of manhood is represented in the media?**

*“No, us men act upon how we want women to see us. Everything is centred upon who is the alpha. You know what I mean. What camera I have, how many lenses it has, who’s the boss? Kahle hle (quite frankly) we want the opposite gender ukut ibone ukuthi nginswempu (to see that I am balling).” (Freedom, Individual interview, 3 April 2023)*

It is interesting that he generalises his response using “us”. In essence, he is saying that material possessions and being an alpha man is what attracts women. It is all about impressing the opposite gender.

**R: Does that validate your masculinity, getting all the attention from women?**

*“Yes... angfuni ukukhulumela mina (I don’t want to speak for myself), I speak of a broader of us being man. Yes, that is correct. There is certain man who would flash things around to feel confident and relevant.” (Freedom, Individual interview, 3 April 2023)*

This interview took me by surprise, as one of the inclusion characteristics in the study was identifying as a born-again man. Yet, he seems to have a skewed relationship with God and religion; he does not believe in being born-again. The generalisation of masculinity concept and experience prevented me from seeing his personal experiences of masculinity. It could

also have been his Pan-Africanism and his Afrocentric persona that really did not let him come through in the conversation.

#### **4.2 Overview of individual interviews.**

The interviews were very different from each other, and each participant gave their own understanding of what it means to be a man and the issues that make them most vulnerable. As the conversations flowed, I got a peek into these men's lives and at times I was tempted to ask more personal questions on some topics that were raised but could not do so for fear of not being able to handle the emotional fall-out. Issues of vulnerability were brought up, such as fear of not being able to provide as one is expected to as man, not feeling appreciated within a marriage and the emotional baggage that comes with that, homophobia of being associated with being queer or gay, fear of not being enough as a man and fear of failing to live up to the religio-cultural norms of masculinity.

Being a born-again man requires a change in behaviour and you adapt a new culture or new way of living, forsaking your old self and your old life. This behavioural change includes not consuming alcohol and not dating, essentially no sexual intercourse before you are married. The sexual abstinence is difficult as alluded by some participants because the body wants what it wants – sexual pleasure. The engagement with media, and specifically social media, presents a lot of temptation for unmarried young men as they are exposed to half-naked women and having to justify why they can't have sex. Interestingly, not even one participant shared in detail what their lifestyle was like before. They alluded to it but left the imagination to wonder. It is as if the new culture or lifestyle they have chosen has wiped out their existence before they were born again. Much was said, but at the same time, nothing was said.

Manhood is understood through the lenses of being a provider, protector and leader and in accordance with God's will and plan. The participants understood manhood as it relates to what is expected of them as men. As Christian born-again men, these ideals of manhood have been entrenched in them and they have been conditioned to experience manhood in this model. The anxiety of not living up to these roles made some of these men question their masculinity: Am I still a man if I cannot provide?

The participants also highlighted issues of sexuality. The fear of being perceived as gay or homosexual is of particular concern for some participants. This was brought on by the religious practice that people cannot date when they are born-again and therefore cannot have sex. The pressure to affirm their masculinity and prove that they are real men, places them in a vulnerable position, feeling that they have to betray their faith and have a girlfriend. Some even marry when they are not ready. One participant said their bisexual identity made them vulnerable.

The collapse of culture and religion in these interviews was very interesting because they are not mutually exclusive or beneficial. Participants ascribed their conflicting relationships with religion and culture largely to their family upbringing and the hard choices they had to make for their own faith and religious beliefs. For example, ancestral worship is a ritual practice in many Zulu families, but once you are born-again, your faith practices and beliefs forbid you from ancestral worship or performing any ritual pertaining to ancestors. Interestingly, participants mentioned one positive influence and how it influenced their manhood: respect. Only one participant mentioned that culture taught him about hard work and how to be strong as man.

In the following section I discuss the second part of the data collection interviews with two groups: the urban and rural focus groups. Each group had its own dynamics and perspectives. I will unpack each focus group, focusing on the questions that were discussed and offer some reflection notes that I took during the discussion. The objectives of the focus group discussion were to discuss the discourse of being born-again, engagement with media promotional material in the production of masculinity and the role of culture and religion in their process of masculinity construction.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Participants did not understand the meaning of masculinity, so I had to use manhood when I was asking questions. Therefore, masculinity and manhood will be used interchangeably in this analysis.

#### 4.2.1 Focus Group Interviews/Discussions Data

Pseudonym	Age	Demographic
Edward	29	KwaThathani Location, Highflat
Ntando	25	Transfeed, Pastor's Kid
Sibusiso	26	Transfeed, Pastor
Mandla	40	Donny Brook
Jay	24	Nazareth, uMzimkhulu
Yaya	23	Nongidi, uMzimkhulu
Mangcibo	25	Nhlazini Reserve
Wakanda	30	Sweetwaters, Pietermaritzburg
Nsindiso	33	Umlazi, Durban.
Lihle	35	Chase Valley, Pietermaritzburg
Babakhe	33	Sweetwaters/ Hilton, Pietermaritzburg
Sjuluka	34	Sweetwaters, Pietermaritzburg

*Table 3: Rural focus group one*

The focus group interviews/discussions were used to generate a collection of views and the meaning behind those views of masculinity. It also offered in-depth understanding of participants' faith beliefs and individual lived experiences. The aim of this discussion was to understand the dominant discourse of masculinity construction among born-again men; to ascertain the role of media, religion/faith, and culture in the process of masculinity construction. There were three focus groups – two rural group interviews and one urban group interview.

The first rural group discussion was scheduled for 27 April 2023, with seven participants having confirmed their availability to participate. However, on the day of the discussion, I received three apologies, and one participant did not show up on the day of the interview and was not contactable. I decided to continue with the three that were present. A second rural group discussion was scheduled for 7 May 2023 for the four participants that were not present on 27 April. The dynamics in this group were quite interesting. Mandla is a pastor of his own church but did not give off that authoritative tone when it came to discussion. Sbusiso who

is also a pastor, a recent graduate and unemployed. His responses were mostly from a godly or biblical perspective. Ntando is what we call a Pastor's Kid (PK); his views were quite liberal. Edward mostly followed on what other participants were saying, but his views came across quite strongly. Magcino is from a rural area. His responses in the group discussions were grounded in the Word of God, with constant reference to scripture. Yaya and Jay are staunch born-again men whose beliefs about manhood and masculinity are aligned with what the church expects of them, and they strongly believe in the ministry of men's conference as a space where they are empowered as Christian men.

The third group discussion was with the urban focus group. The dynamics in this focus group were very different from the others. Firstly, two of the participants (Nsindiso and Lihle) are pastors who are actively involved in the church, so they spoke a lot. One of the other participants even pointed out that you could tell from their responses that they are pastors. Coming from different Pentecostal denominations and different upbringings, I had thought this group would butt heads a lot, but they often were encouraged by each other's energy. Secondly, I could not really get a sense of who everyone is in terms of their own experiences of masculinity, because discussions were about who they are now as born-again men and their understanding of who they are centred on the conceptions of biblical manhood, and no-one touched on their experiences before conversion.

At the beginning of the discussion, I introduced myself as a researcher and gave an overview of the research objectives and aim. I then proceeded to inform them about informed consent and assured their anonymity. I also requested that we do not share anything with anyone outside of the group discussion. To start off the discussion, I posed the following question:

### **1. What does it mean to be a man?**

Participants in the focus group discussions expressed different views of what it means to be a man and the definition they attach to manhood. They define manhood, or what it means to be a man, through roles that men play within their families, society and faith landscape.

*“Regarding the issue of being a man, there are different definitions of being a man but according to my understanding. A man is someone who is a leader, a person who*

*has encouraging words, a person who is a protector, protection those around him, family, friends and so on. You have to be strong.” (Edward, FGD1, 27 April 2023)*

*“If I were to describe a man, obviously, a man is a responsible male person. A man is a leader; a man is a provider. Mm...a man is protector, caregiver.” (Yaya, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

*“Indeed, a man is a leader, protector and gives protection. Your responsibility tells us about your manhood. Maybe in church, there are many things you can do to be asserted as a man.” (Jay, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

*“You need to be a responsible somebody, a man is a protector, caregiver to his family and all his surroundings.” (Mandla, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

*“So, we see a person in the position of leadership, authority, ability for formulate. So that's basically what a man is. You need your guide. He dominates. You protect.” (Nsindiso, FGD3, 24 May 2023)*

*“Manhood for me is being competitive and compatible in everything you do. I believe that is how society has established norms of manhood. You would find a woman doing certain things and society will say, ‘You are a man’. Why? Because manhood has been associated with being competitive and compatible in every space you are in; that’s a definition of manhood for me.” (Ntando, FGD1, 27 April 2023)*

Manhood is defined by the role a man plays in their immediate environment. A man is a leader, protector and caregiver; he guides and dominates. Some participants understood manhood from a gendered perspective and something that one works for, rather than being given.

*“For me I would say, ukuba indonda or umuntu wesilisa , ngicabanga ukuthi ukuba umuntu wesilisa.” (Being a man or a male, I think being a male person.) (Wakanda, FGD3, 24 May 2023)*

*“Being a man is being a mature male, that is where evaluate your actions, decision, and your responsibility not only from your home but also the community and church so that we see that we actually have men.” (Jay, FGD2, 24 May 2023)*

*“You need to have some qualities; you need to gain some qualification to be called a man... It’s not easy for your t harass those close to them. A man who slaps his wife, is not a man, he is a male person.” (Mandla, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

*“A man is someone olengisile (who has a penis). I know women also wear pants but there are some men who are man by name but their actions say another thing.” (Lihle, FGD3, 24 May 2023)*

*“A man is a person who God has given a leadership position, they can decide, take a leadership position, lead by example whenever you are. People need to see there is a man there.” (Edward, FGD1, 27 April 2023)*

This gender differentiation informs the understanding of what it means to be a man: a responsible male person. It also connotes that a male person cannot be defined or given the title of being a man unless they have proven themselves and display certain qualities that confirm their manhood. There is also a reference to violence; although not explicit, it states that a man does not beat his wife or partner. If they do so, they are just male persons rather than men, because they are failing to protect their loved ones as inferred above.

Participants’ understanding of manhood is also informed by their faith beliefs and traditions. These participants understood their masculinity from a godly and biblical perspective.

*“But from a godly perspective, being a man is being aligned with God and doing what God has called you to be.” (Sbusiso, FG1, 27 April 2023)*

*“God gave the authority over a man to Adam. To be a man is about responsibility and authority that God has given you. You need to be accountable. Masculinity in all is about the broad way in which God gives the pathway and dispensation for a man.” (Magcino, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

*“...it puts the men as the husband. Or it's like Jesus is the head of the church, so he's the head, the head of the wife.” (Nsindiso, FGD3, 24 May 2023)*

*“Being a man is long journey that needs God... Futhi indida ithenjwa uNkululnkulu (God also trusts a man).” (Sjuluka, FGD3, 24 May 2023)*

One participant's response was interesting in his explanation of what manhood entails within a family structure, and interestingly, no participant in his group discussion disagreed with him:

*“For instance, at home, a woman should know that place of a woman and know that you are the man. A woman should know that a man is the mouth of God. If you are a man, you need to be respected.” (Magcino, FGD3, 7 May 2023)*

This statement speaks to the hierarchical nature of gender roles within the family structure and the different expectations for men and women. It is essentially saying a woman should know her place and a man must exert his authority within his household to make it known that he is the man. A man is equivalent to God. Such notions of masculinity and manhood make one question whether masculinity within the Christian faith landscape is constructed through a heteropatriarchal framework, and whether masculinity can really be transformed, or should we accept the existence of palatable patriarchy?

## **2. How has your faith and culture influenced your manhood?**

Participants shared the different cultural and religious influences on their lives and how it has shaped them to be the men they are today.

*“The society has somehow detected what man should be. My experience from society, I'm from the Xhosa culture, to transition into a man, you have to go to the mountain to be circumcised. that's when you start being a man. Society that I should behave in a certain way. And now that behaviour was no longer there because I was a Christian, and according to the teachings and the doctrine of Christianity these other things that are worldly, I was not doing them and it got to a point where I was told this guy is a homosexual and first it was something that hurt me.” (Sbusiso, FGD1, 27 April 2023)*

*“...there are challenges where society expects you as a man that you should lead a family especially if you are the firstborn. They expect you especially from a family that is not Christian, they expect you lead they are doing cultural things and participate as a man. They see your manhood as part of participation.” (Edward, FGD1, 27 April 2023)*

These two participants explained the landscape of what it is like to be a born-again Christian and the cultural expectations and norms that a young man should live up to. They are not exempt from cultural practices that are expected from men. According to cultural norms, a man must be able to practice cultural rituals because women are not allowed to head and lead these rituals. It also speaks to cultural gender roles that dictate social order and hierarchy. Mandla further explains that a man who does not practice cultural rituals is regarded as useless.

*“Secondly, culture, a man who does not seek out and speak to their ancestor, they are a useless man. It affects us negatively as born-again men.” (Mandla, FGD2, 7 May 2023).*

Performing of cultural rituals affirms one’s masculinity. The participants also noted the positive cultural influences on their lives as men. The below extracts refer to the positive influences of culture on men. Culture teaches that men must respect themselves and that they must also be respected regardless of the positions they hold. Culture has also entrenched responsibility in men and the character they need to display.

*“In my own experience, cultural influence as men you must have respect yourself in order for you to be respected. If you are in leadership, you are a man of your word, you lead by example...you must be under the authority of your word.” (Magcino, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

*“In culture according to my view, a man regardless of their position they hold, a man is respected in culture more than the religious side.” (Mandla, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

*“I grew up in the homestead and when there was someone screaming at my neighbour’s house, men were required to wake up and as a young boy we also woke up to go assist. This entrenched in my mind that a man has a responsibility to be a protector. This is the positive side of culture.” (Jay, FGD2, 7 May2023)*

The participants also highlighted the negative side and oppressive nature of culture, and how its dismissal of men’s expression of vulnerability leads to mental health issues.

*“Culture has negatively influenced my manhood in a number of ways, you would find that there are things like, ‘a man is defined as a man who is stubborn’.” (Jay, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

*“When it comes to the negative side, when culture says, ‘a man doesn’t cry’. I hate that thing... if you notice, I have raised this somewhere. Have you noticed that those individuals who are mentally challenged are men? It’s because of these things that say a man does not cry, a man is strong. This affects them mentally. In other words, culture sometimes is oppressive to us as men.” (Mandla, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

It became clear through our discussion of the influence of faith and culture in their masculinity construction process that there are cultural and social expectations that men must live up to, to affirm their masculinity. I therefore asked the follow-up question: **How have these expectations (of being a leader, provider, protector) shaped you as a man of God and the kind of behaviour expected from you?**

*“You must be a boy who is into girls, fixed to the world, being into alcohol. Behaving almost like a thug to fit in. I think that is the behaviour that society depicts man to be.” (Sbusiso, FGD1, 27 April 2023)*

*“What am I capable of? Mm...cos I need to discover that so that I don’t live pleasing other people based on what they expect from me as a man. There are certain things that I can do, there are certain things that I cannot do. For instance, my father loves farming, he believes that a man must have livestock, that’s his belief, and I guess I can rent something from that. But if that’s not in me. it can look like I am a failure kuyena (to him).” (Lihle, FGD3, 24 May 2023)*

*“...to perform rituals, when there is ritual in the community, you are expected to help with the slaughtering of the cow, chill with the boys and have meat. As a Christian it is not possible to participate in those rituals, society looks at you differently from anyone else. I think other things Sbusiso has explained like being into girls, if you not doing that, they start looking at you differently.” (Edward, FGD1, 27 April 2023)*

However, one participant had different views on the role of these social expectations:

*“...but I think it is really all coming from what God already expects. It’s also when you, when the question is really around, how do these influence me in terms of how I carry myself all of that it should be in a positive way, rather than seeing it as a pressure. I should be appreciating the fact that the people are taking me back to where creation is in terms of who I am.” (Babakhe, FGD3, 24 May 2023)*

*“Also, I think another challenge we have in our generation and the more we get ourselves educated, we want to define man by incorporating diversity and inclusion and we then shift from what the Gospel say a man is. We run a risk of being in a dilemma because when we read Genesis 3, when God asked Adam what you have done. He doesn’t take responsibility.” (Nsindiso, FGD3, 24 May 20223)*

There are three things happening in the above extracts that need to be unpacked. Firstly, who I am as a man should not be defined by social expectations but by knowing your capabilities and your limitations in terms of the things that you can do. This places you in a position of being secure in who you are as a man. Secondly, these expectations of masculinity originate from what God expects from men, and society reminds men of who they are according to biblical norms. Lastly, if we shift away from understanding what a man is from a biblical perspective, we run the risk of men not wanting to take responsibility. Young men are also expected to have girlfriends or sexual partners to affirm their manhood, and to bond with peers that are not born-again. The expectation of what it means to be a man is far more complex in that you must ask yourself: How do I relate to what God expects of me? Am I living up to these expectations? Living up to these expectations is a constant negotiation of masculinity, because on one hand, you want to live your best life as possible, but on the other hand, you are expected to align your masculinity to God’s expectations of you as a man, whilst performing the social roles that have been imposed to affirm your masculinity.

Interestingly, most participants did not respond to the first part of the question regarding religion. Those who did, did not go into as much detail as they did when discussing culture.

The below extract alludes to the redemptive nature of religion and its influence on masculinity.

*“I grew up in a cultural environment, where things are done according to culture. I would say there are a lot of things I never realised they were wrong before I become a man of faith. Things like ancestral workshop, which are things that are not wrong when you don’t know God. I find myself as a born-again being criticised... there’s a lot of behaviours that they promote. We know that sleeping with a woman before marriage is a sin but culturally, this belief does not exist. When you had sex with a woman before marriage and they were a virgin, you would be fined a cow. But knowing God, you realise that this is wrong. Some things, even when you take a wife, most people are not married but they have not finished paying bride price, but they live together. When we became Christian, we know that it is important to get married with your partner, this is how we were put in the right tracks. We grew up being encouraged to fight... that this one must be made strong. Yes, it’s okay, you can defend yourself but for some people that thing becomes a bad habit that can lead you to do bad things. A person may become violent because of these practices. Drinking is also understandable, but when you become born-again, you stop drinking. For me, faith has had positive influence.” (Yaya, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

Yaya highlights the redemptive nature of being born-again and how he sees himself as a man. Culturally, having multiple sexual partners as a man is accepted, but as a born-again Christian man, this is not allowed. It also highlights the behavioural changes that are brought on by religious beliefs and practices. The behavioural changes are required of the born-again man to fully embody this newfound identity.

### **3. Based on the media material (video), how is manhood and the view of what a man is supposed to be, defined and portrayed?**

Participants shared different opinions and views when it came to masculinity representation and the dominant notions of manhood as portrayed in the promotional videos.

*“What came across my mind, we need to separate the views about man, we need to look at man from the biblical point of view. What does the Bible say about men? What does society say about men, what does the culture say about man. One thing that will give us a clear understanding of what man is or what men are ought to be.” (Sbusiso, FGD1, 27April 2023)*

*“We really must not shy away from what the society saying, but as man within the Christian community if I can put it like that, we also need to lean on God, what God is saying about man, there is a scripture in Ephesians 5 that talks about men and impurity. Then it says let no one deceive you. In whatever you do and what society says, look back on God and lean on that.” (Ntando, FGD1, 27 April 2023)*

*“We need to hear what society says about man, and obviously compare to hat God says about man. If we turn a blind side to what society says about men, this means we will have a shortfall in the city in understanding thee man out there.” (Edward, FGD1, 27 May 2027)*

The common thread in this extract is that society cannot really dictate what a man should be without considering the biblical view of manhood. It connotes that we can never fully understand a man without or outside of what God says about a man. Participants also dispelled the myth that men don't cry.

*“When I watched those videos, I was asking myself the question, a real man? AY then I'm not a real man because I believe crying helps...” (Wakanda, FGD3, 24 May 2023)*

*“Obviously we hear ‘Real men don't cry’, and as soon as they said the real man, I wonder which place are those men found because I personally, men generally have been perceived to cry. But real men understand their manhood and not leaning on what the world thinks or what the world says. While listening, that one for me was... it emphasised a lot of how the pressure in our society view what a man is.” (Babakhe, FGD3, 24 May 2023)*

*“When society says a man must not cry, they must go to war, they expect men to have power because they are men...” (Edward, FGD1, 27 April 2023)*

The notion that “real men don't cry” is oppressive towards men and hinders them from expressing their emotions and vulnerability. There is already enough social pressure in terms of what men are supposed to be; prohibiting them to express their feminine side robs them of the opportunity to express themselves. It suggests that if you cry, you are not a real man,

but reality is that men do cry and that is when they get to understand who they are as men. The consequence of such expectations is that it creates mental health issues.

The second rural focus group indicated that they had not engaged with the promotional videos that were sent to them prior to the discussion, so I could not engage them. I did however ask them the following question: **Does your manhood match with what the church expects of you?**

*“Yes, it does match the expectation of the church. According to my faith traditions, a man must be responsible, influential, leader, protector and that is what is being preached at church about being a man. These are also my own beliefs as a man. I believe this ideology. I believe that I am all these things that the church teaches about manhood., manhood is a journey of maturity, you learn along the way. Attending men’s conference when they talk about manhood issues.” (Jay, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

*“Yes it does match but at first I didn’t. We come to church not knowing God, but you change. I got to church as a cultural man who has my own beliefs. There are lot of behaviour that I had to give up as a man of faith and trying to follow Gods way. At church we are taught God’s was. I grew up in the church so now not these are installed in men and end up living the life that God expects of me. The men’s conference teaches us how a man should be.” (Yaya, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

The indoctrination of what manhood or masculinity is within the Christian faith landscape has assisted men in constructing their masculine identities within Christianity. The ideology of a man being a leader, protector and provider is understandable, but given the current socio-economic situation in South Africa, with the youth unemployment rate being above 34%, most people are unable to provide, therefore are not seen as men in this instance. What happens to a man’s identity if they can no longer provide? How do I as a born-again man negotiate my masculinity in a landscape that says I should be the leader of my own home, but yet my voice is silenced because I do not bring in the desired income? Am I still a real man? These are the questions that need to be grappled with for further reflection on how some men are left with no choice but to be patriarchal to affirm their masculinity. The men’s conference also entrenches this ideology without even challenging men to explore their vulnerability.

#### 4. What does it mean to be a born-again man?

Being born-again is an individual experience and differs according to this experience. Participants expressed what it means to be born-again. It is a complete transformation; you are in the process of becoming Christ-like and your life must be ordered and governed by Christ. Your life decisions must reflect that you are born-again, every step you take must be ordered by God. Being born-again is a process of being habitually transformed.

*“Before I am a born-again man, I am a man. Then the attributes that should be found on somebody who is a born-again man would have too...I can’t remember the scripture...lomqondo owawukukrestu awube kini (it’s seeking the mind of Christ that governs my mind). Theres a place where Paul says I have died to myself, now, Christ to live in me... so it's that understanding I would say my mind have to be governed by Christ; my mind has to be governed by who has to. Whatever that I do, I need to assess myself. Would Christ do what I'm doing with Christ? Make these decisions with Christ.” (Lihle, FGD3, 24 May 2023)*

*“So, for you to be born again. Christ says...being a born-again man is a man who has a close relationship with God. And how you build. That is through having times of prayer and having a relationship with your, your, your, your divine Creator, basically. And then that direction, or the vision that you didn't shape you. When you are born again man, every step you are taking it is ordered and guided by God. If you want to change a plan, you ask God for direction.” (Nsindiso, FGD3, 24 May 2023)*

*“To be a born-again man, is to live according to God’s standards, to what God is saying about men. That should be my ultimate God. That is what I should seek to achieve as a born-again man.” (Sbusiso, FGD1, 27 April 2023)*

*“A born-again man, a person has been converted. They are no longer the person they were before,” (Yaya, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

*“To be a born-again man, you are a teacher, you teach about Christ, you teach about Christian values, you uphold, you preach, and you do whatever... Also, if you are a born-again man, you ought to respect other people’s beliefs and stuff. Some people will love you and you think because you respect them.” (Mandla, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

To be a born-again man, one must be converted and adopt a new way of living. A life that does not resemble life they had before accepting Christ and starting the conversion process. Becoming like-minded with Christ connotes that one cannot think or even entertain thoughts that are not Christ-like. Being a born-again man should also reflect on your behaviour and how you conduct yourself.

*“Your behaviour must show that you are born-again, doing the great commission work even if you don’t, your actions speak to themselves. You become an example. Each and everywhere you go, you have good influence who is grounded in the Word. To be very influential in your ways.” (Jay, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

*“So being born-again is repenting from the person you were. Your ways are the same as before. Before you were saved, you would have a girlfriend, bring her home, do whatever but coming to the knowledge of God, you realised this is wrong... then you must leave this behind so that another person may see what it is like to be a born-again man.” (Yaya, FGD2, 7 May 2023)*

Transformation from the man that you were is a visible sign that you have been born-again, and your behaviour also speaks to that fact. If this theological ideal can transform a man, it also leaves room to envision a liberated and redeemed form of masculinity that is life-giving and positive. There is implied patriarchy in this discussion, very subtle. Discourse of leadership, headship, living according to God’s plan, men being respected and looking to God’s plan and Word for modelling a new form of masculinity.

#### **4.2.1 Focus group discussion overview.**

The focus group discussion yielded different views of masculinity, the meaning of manhood and its relation to media, religion and culture. Though the discussions took place on different dates, the same themes emerged. The dominant understanding of masculinity and what it means to be a man were defined within the heteronormative and heteropatriarchal framework which defines a man through the roles he plays in the family, community and the church. One of the interesting things I observed during these discussions is that the first respondent almost always sets the tone of the conversation or cues how other participants respond. For example, in the first group discussion, masculinity centred on God’s perspective or view of

masculinity. In all their discussions, participants in the first group circled around the godly/biblical perspective of manhood. The second focus group centred their responses in terms of understanding manhood based on the distinction between a male person and a “real man”. The urban focus group centred their understanding of masculinity around the religio-cultural roles and expectations that men had to live up to.

The collapse of culture and religion was also evident in these group discussions. Participants expressed how they often had to navigate their masculinity around issues of religion and culture because they all have their unintended consequences. There was no way in which participants could embrace their cultural traditions and practices without having their faith practices being questioned, and vice versa. Their religious traditions prohibited born-again men to partake in any cultural ritual or practice and compromised their standing within society and culture. It was also an indication of the redemptive nature of religion/faith through the transformation of behaviour.

The promotional video that was discussed in the focus group brought up issues of vulnerability and the dispute around the notion that men do not cry. One of the things that came from the first rural group was that media representation of masculinity was skewed in that it did not portray masculinity according to godly perspective but rather what society expects men to be. The urban group discussion dispelled the idea that men do not cry and could not associate with that ideal because from their own experiences, they believe that men do cry.

Throughout the focus group discussion, vulnerability is a recurring theme. It is multifaceted; men are vulnerable to cultural expectations of manhood and living up to these expectations. There is an acceptance that they may never really live up to this expectation and an understanding of what that means for them. To further explore this aspect of masculinity, an auto-photography data collection tool was used to explore how men navigate masculinity issues in their everyday life. Participants reflected on their experiences by sending a diary reflection on WhatsApp messenger with a photograph attached that relates to that experience.

### **4.3 Auto-photography reflections**

These reflections arose from the themes that came from the focus group discussion. There was no structure to these auto-photographic reflections, but they were based on the group discussion exploring the meaning of manhood and the intersection of media, religion and culture pertaining to men. The purpose of these reflection was to engage men's vulnerability and to give them an opportunity reflect on their lived experiences outside of the focus group discussion.

The first auto-photography reflection was received from Sibusiso. He is from Eastern Cape by birth but moved to KwaZulu Natal for educational purposes. He is university graduate and employed. By calling, he leads is pastor of a Pentecostal church. By virtue of being Xhosa, he underwent the initiation process of ULwaluko, a rite of passage for young boys to transition into manhood. During the focus group discussion, he reflected on the conflict between his cultural upbringing and what is expected of him as a man and those of being a born-again man who is also called into ministry. He also reflects ion the oppressive nature of the heteropatriarchal system and his experience with the systematic. As would be evident In his reflection, the soft tone of his voice and embodiment of a Pentecostal masculinity, he is perceived as gay or homosexual, which appears to be the space that he constantly navigate his masculine experiences. He also reflects on how the systematic prevent has become oppressive towards men in that they cannot openly express their vulnerability, insinuating that it often leads to mental health issues such as depression. In the reflection he provides a picture of a depressed men, reflecting of his emotional state at the time.

#### **First reflection dated 10 May 2023**

*I was in a taxi from Ballito to Durban, I asked to get off and when I was about to open the door, the driver said, "Oh it's you brother who is getting off...your voice sounds like a woman, but you are a man." You see that there is a certain opinion that he has about me or certain definition of what a man should sound like. Secondly, on my Facebook I received DM, someone would ask for your number and when they talk to you, they say you voice doesn't match your structure, you sound feminine. I get confused as to how I should speak as a man.*

*Just to show you, men are suffering identity crisis because of their opinions. Some have flexible bodies and have feminine voices and end up doing things that God never intended them to be... because of social influence when they expect men to be strong. We will not all be strong; we won't have masculine voices but that shouldn't define manhood. We must erase those views. In fact, we as a church are far behind when dealing with issues of manhood. These are some of the discussions that were never discussed.*

There's a certain expectation that a young man who has passed puberty, that their voices would change and become deeper, resembling that of a man. Soft or high-pitched voices are attributed to women and a man who has such a voice is frowned upon. It moves from a masculine presenting body to a masculine voice to match the body and the social expectation of having an authoritative voice of being a man.

**Second reflection dated: 11 May 2023**

*"I just need my mom to say 'Hay kuzoba ryt Ndo'...the fact that can never be disputed. So weird we often undo this cos we have been told 'men must be strong'. Sizofa sobancane (we will die young).*



*Figure 4: Man in thought.*

Figure 4 described how Sibusiso was feeling at that moment when he needed his mom. He expressed it with this tagline, "A man suffering from depression and anxiety, trying to make it to the mountain top. He is facing injustice and prejudice from the outside world."

His reflection on where he was when sharing this, shows a man who was trying to make sense of where his life is going, and navigating the social expectations of him as a “strong man”, basically saying, I don’t have to be strong all the time. “*Sizo Sibancane*” (We will die young); simply saying we may not live very long as men because we are often told we must be strong, yet we are dying on the inside. From this reflection we also get an understanding that though we may have our identities, society will always expect us to conform to socially constructed ideals of manhood.

The second auto-photography reflection was received from Lihle. Lihle- Is a father of two, a boy and girl and a husband. Lihle grew up with both parents, but due to his father being away, he was raised by his mother. He reflects on this upbringing and the challenges he has had a man who had to figure out things for himself with an absent but present father. His navigates this terrain of fatherhood without a proper reference system as his own. He is a pastor and works for a faith-based organization, born-again and life coach. His engagement in the urban focus group was largely informed by religious notion of being a man, along with other men who were part of this group. In this discussion, he was critical of the systematic, arguing that women can also do what men do and expressed that he is a man first before being a born-again man. His standpoint in the group was unique in that he acknowledges how both culture and religion influenced his masculine experiences but he also acknowledges his own agency as being a part of the systematic that often does a disservice to both men and women.

**First reflection dated 7 June 2023:**

*I think as a father, reflecting on what makes me vulnerable is that I’ve never been a father and am a product of an absent father because he was working away from home to make means that something is provided for us to eat. Sometimes as a man I rely on the Lord as I navigate through this role of fathering. I want to be present and have a positive impact in my relationship with my kids.*

With this reflection, I sent a picture (Figure 5) reflecting my own vulnerability regarding fatherhood.



*Figure 5: Father and son.*

*“Becoming a father has been one of my greatest achievements. There is nothing I would not do for this little man, yet in all this pride and glory of being a father, he has made me the most vulnerable.”*

As men, we have not been encouraged to be vulnerable and open about things that makes us vulnerable. Perhaps this preoccupation with masculinity being opposite of femininity is what binds us as men into a space where we don't express our vulnerability without risking our attribute of being a “strong man”.

***Second reflection dated 29 August 2023:***

*So, my, guy, this is something challenging neh, and it is hard for many of us as men to even talk about such movement because they tend to define us. First and foremost, I was raised by a woman, but my dad was supportive of her role as she spent most of the time with is as he was working hard to provide. Now that's on its own means that as a young man, I had to learn some stuff for myself and didn't have much reference. My dad discovered my moment of growth unexpectedly and on an inappropriate*

*moment because we weren't that close for him to realise that I was ready to be the man now and I was ready to take a wife.*



*Figure 6: Family with absent father*

This reflection has many layers, ranging from the upbringing of a black man, single parenthood, and the absence of a father. Single parenthood in the sense that both parents were alive, but the mother or woman took on the child's upbringing on her own, with minimum assistance from the father. The socio-economic situation and the expectation of a father to be a provider has robbed many young boys the opportunity to have fathers present in all aspects of their lives, not only financially. The consequence of an absent father is that it robs them the opportunity to bond with their children.

The third reflection was received from Mpofo. Mpofo- A Zimbabwean born, 24-year-old born-again man and an older brother. Mpofo has an undergraduate degree in which he obtained in Zimbabwe and came to South African for better employment opportunities. He very much lives up to the dominant discourses of masculinity and lives up to this expectation of being a man. Particularly the role of being a provide and being a responsible man. During his individual interviews he expressed that he had paid for his sister's universities fee's and feels obligated to be there for his family financially even though his father is still alive. Unlike the other two participants who offered a reflection, he is not a pastor but involved in ministry work. His upbringing, his belief on the systematic places him at a vulnerable

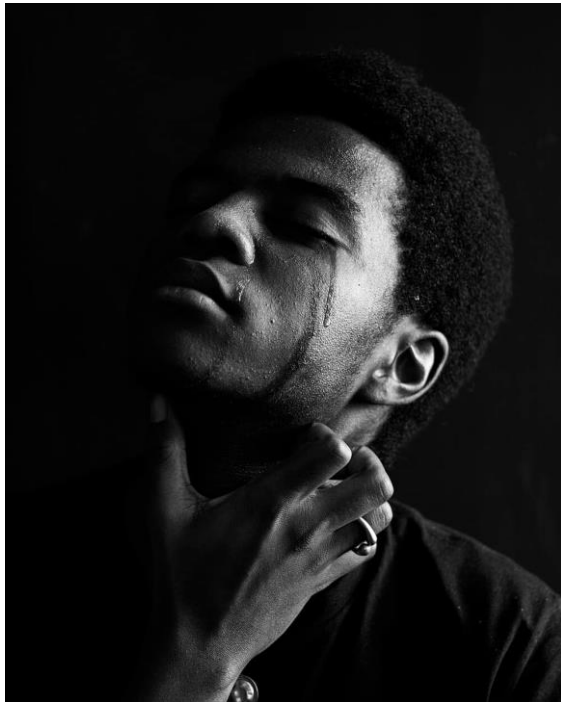
position as he fears that his inability to provide will render him a failure and he cannot afford to be a failure as he strives to succeed in all that he does. The motivation for failure and his appreciation of the systematic is oppressive towards him as he often feels like he has to wear a mask most of the times and pretend that he is okay, living up to the saying men don't cry.

***First reflection dated 3 June 2023:***

*I always found no comfort at all as a young man to talk about my weaknesses and failures. I deeply believe whatever I am doing, I should excel, and I should produce excellence. At some point I once thought that a man doesn't fail, only to realise that life sometimes present some realities that challenge you as a young man. I have been receiving pressure from all angles with regards to marriage. To some people, it feels easy to get married. However, as a young man, I know it's not easy as they think because I have some personal standards and principles that I should not violate. Yes, at some point I feel am failing, I feel am left out, I feel I'm lagging behind...When I try something and it fails, I blame myself and I somehow judge myself and conclude that maybe I'm not man enough.*

*Now going through all the difficult situations, I find myself sometimes pretending. Pretending as if I am okay, pretending as if it is cool (sometimes burning inside) but I could not say because culture taught us that men don't cry. Culture, it's been sounding quite rough on young men.*

Pretending or masking one's emotional state and feeling is something that has become second nature to men. This discourse was also evident in the individual interviews, specifically *Sipho*. The patriarchal system as well certain norms that have been entrenched in society has forced men to hide in the open, not showing up as fully self and present but presenting a male persona that expected of them. The social norm that men don't cry has emotionally crippled men from being fully human because of masculine attributes and characteristics that they should embody. Men are not supposed to be vulnerable.



*Figure 7: Distraught man.*

This reflection speaks of the complexity of masculinity and manhood that men navigate as it relates to the oppressive nature of cultural expectation. Failing is not an option for him; it makes him question if he is man enough.

The cultural notion of “men don’t cry” has also placed him in an uncomfortable position where he cannot be fully vulnerable or express his emotions the way he wishes to.

#### **4.4 Theme development**

The data analysis process as explained in the preceding chapter used thematic content analysis. This large amount of data was first broken down into codes which enabled me to arrange the data according to the research questions. Elliot (2018) and Belotto (2018) assert that the process of coding allows for the identification and interpretation of large amounts of data and text in meaningful ways. Braun and Clarke (2022:53) define a code as an output of the coding process, an analytic or interesting idea, concept or meaning associated with a particular segment of data. For this project, the coding of data was done through attaching codes to multiple sections of data that presented as a meaningful unit. This study explores

born-again men's masculinity construction process as it intersects with religion, culture and media. I therefore allocated codes of data according to the research questions. This process enabled theme development from the semi-structured focus group discussions and auto-photography transcripts.

Through the analysis of the above detailed data transcripts and utilisation of the codes for the interpretation of data, seven themes were generated. These themes addressed the research questions which the study set out to answer. These themes provide a framework in which organised analysis or research observations are based on the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2017).

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the data collected using three tools: individual interviews, focus group discussions and auto-photography. The available data set distilled themes which will be discussed in the next chapter. Thematic content analysis was used to generate these thematic areas based on the research question and sub-research questions of the study. Theme one is masculinity as performance, with three sub-themes: roles men play, religio-cultural expectations and embodiment of strength. Theme two is religious identity with two sub-themes: behavioural change and new culture. Theme three is the collapse of religion and culture. Theme four is media engagement and has three sub-themes, namely unfair representation of masculinity, networked masculinity and temptation. Theme five is embodiment with the subtheme of sexuality. Theme six is vulnerability. Another theme that I will also engage and explore in the following chapter, is saying a lot yet saying nothing, to engage men's willingness and openness in grappling with issues of masculinity at its core. Though these themes tell the story within the data set, it also felt like there were barriers with honesty in terms of the things the participants were not saying because they are Christian. It also makes me question whether my positionality was an additional barrier. The next chapter engages with these themes using available literature to enhance my discussion and reflection.

## 5 CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

*“Before I am born-again, I am a man.”*

*Lihle, FGD3*

### 5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the dominant discourse of masculinity and masculinity construction of born-again men, and how they navigate and construct their masculine identities in a post-colonial, contemporary society. I engaged with three literature themes or bodies of scholarship on men, masculinity and religion, African Pentecostalism, and masculinity representation in the media. These literature themes were informed by the study aims and objectives as outlined in the introductory chapter. The first thematic area – men, masculinity and religion – discussed the complexity of masculinity within the South African context and the factors that contribute to the process of masculinity construction. It highlights how South African history has shaped gendered relations, mapping out the cause of men’s subjective experiences and how they define their gender identity. The masculinity landscape in the South African context has largely been in relation to violence, violence against women, the reconstruction of men’s identities post-apartheid, and the crisis they find themselves in (Hamber, 2010). Scholars (Ratele, 2014, 2022; Pyke, 2020; Langa, 2023) assert that within a contemporary society, to fully understand what it means to be a man in a post-colonial context, we must engage with the subjective experiences of socio-political and socio-economical factors, and the relationship men have with social institutions such as religion, culture, and social norms. They highlight the complexity of the process of masculinity construction.

The study sample was born-again Pentecostal men in KwaZulu-Natal. It therefore was essential to engage with a thematic area that focused on Pentecostalism in the African context. This theme discusses African Pentecostalism, the four categories of Pentecostalism, and its fundamental doctrine of conversion and salvation, popularly known within the Pentecostal circles as being born-again. Being born-again implies a radical change and transformation in religiosity and behaviour (Manglos, 2010). This ideo-theological identity then informs how Pentecostal men construct their masculine identities. It is argued that

Pentecostalism, through its teaching and traditions, can inform the construction of positive masculinity that does not ascribe to the hegemonic notions of masculinity.

I then engaged with masculinity representation in media, particularly popular culture media and its representations of masculinity. These themes explored men's lifestyle magazines and the embodied physical representation of masculinity. It explored social networking sites and how masculinity is constructed and negotiated in such spaces, particularly challenging the hegemonic notions of masculinity. This contestation of masculinity in social media networking sites was then further explored in websites and blogs where pro-masculinity groups advocate for hegemonic masculinity and discredit feminist ideologies of gender and manosphere (Trott, 2022).

The process of masculinity construction is complex for men in the global south, as they contend with a variety of factors and social norms to affirm their masculine identities. There is existing scholarship that has explored the social construction of masculinity as a gender identity and has appropriated hegemonic masculinity to theorise about men (Morrell et al., 2001; Connell, 2005; Ratele et al., 2011; Jewkes & Morrel, 2018; Langa, 2020). The relationship between men, masculinity and religion has also been explored within the religious or theological landscape (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012; Owino, 2012; Van Klinken, 2016) and scholars have looked at how, over time, religion influences masculinity. Contemporary society is filled with mediated, filtered and altered representations of masculinity, and men are expected to live up to this hyper-masculine ideal that has been carefully curated to attract consumers (Vokey et al., 2011). However, there is not enough scholarship that explored how these three factors influence the masculinity construction process for men in general, much less born-again Christian men who identify as born-again. To bridge this gap in scholarship, the study focuses on the construction and negotiation of masculinity among born-again men in KwaZulu-Natal, sampling both urban and rural areas.

I employed participatory research methodology to explore the embodied complexities of masculinity as a gendered identity. These embodied experiences are embedded in meaning that is rooted in how we experience ourselves as gendered beings and the society in which we express our gender (Field-Springer & Striley, 2018). This study used three data collection

tools: individual interviews, focus group discussions and auto-photography. Each of these tools generated data for the study as presented in the previous chapter.

In this chapter, I discuss the themes that were generated using thematic content analysis, which is a descriptive representation of qualitative data (Anderson, 2005). The following themes were generated: masculinity as performance; religious identity; collapse of religion and culture; mediated masculinity; sexuality and embodiment; vulnerability; and saying a lot without saying anything. In the discussion of these themes, I will draw on existing scholarship to offer a more nuanced reflection of the data set. These themes will also be discussed in relation to the research questions and theoretical frames that were adopted for this study, namely African masculinity, redemptive masculinity theories and media theory.

The opening quote by *Lihle* sets the tone in which this discussion chapter engages with and grapples with the “self” as born-again man whose identity religious identity is secondary in the performance of masculinity according to social norms. It also grapples with the everyday lived experiences that born-again men go through when navigating and negotiating their masculinity construction.

## **5.2 Masculinity as performance**

In the process of understanding the construction of gender and its performance, we must understand the body as gendered (Hearn, 2012; Graybill, 2016; Wines, 2023). Bodies are carriers of the social role and the expectation of how the gendered body should represent itself within a specific context (Hearn, 2012). According to Wines (2023) the male body is a vehicle and place for performance, and that failing to understand the significance of the body in the process of masculinity construction would mean that we have misunderstood the way in which gender is constructed through and in performance. Understanding performance as a theme within masculinity studies opens the discussion of the role that social institutions such as religion, culture, traditions and rituals play in everyday negotiation of identity and negotiation of masculinity (Kirby & Van Klinken, 2023:567). The findings of this study demonstrate the social role and expectation that has been placed on men and must perform through their bodies for their masculinity to be affirmed. The embodiment of these social

roles operates within a discursive that men must be a provider, penetrator, leader, and head of their families and in their community (Hearn, 2012).

Born-again men process of masculinity construction is influenced by societal expectation of being a provider, protector and leader. This is further entrenched by the religious teachings that men are heads of households. At the core of these masculine discourses is the performance and embodiment of these traits and attributes to affirm one's masculine identity. Scholars (Both and Ratele, 2014; Harris, 2012) argues that the provision discourse is significantly important the construction and performance of masculinity. They argue that money gives men sense of identity and their ability to financially provide for their families not only affirm their masculinity, but it also means that they have successfully performed their masculine role.

Judith Butler's Theory of Gender Performativity asserts that gender is performed as a product of societal norms that have been produced through discourses over time and that gender roles are social performances that an individual enacts in their everyday life to affirm their feminine or masculine gender identity. Morrell (2001) defines masculinity as a socially constructed male gender identity, belonging to male persons; a fluid identity that changes over time. Male persons in society are given the masculine gender that is characterised by aggression, unfemininity, dominance, power, assertiveness, risky sexual behaviour, etc. (Shefer et al., 2011; Jewkes & Morrell, 2018). From a young age, boys are socialised into doing manual labour or work outside the house as domestic work is reserved for girls (Ratele et al., 2010). This socialisation initiates gender roles from a young age, so when a boy becomes a man, he knows what is expected of him as a man, which is to be strong, protect your loved ones and provide for your family and children. The performance of this gendered identity is solely to assert one's masculine identity, status and standing within his immediate family and society. This discursive has permeated the study of men and masculinities, highlighting the embodied politics of masculinity (Hearn, 2012; Langa, 2020; Ratele, 2022).

Ideals of masculinity, according to Cook (2017), have long been linked to labour productivity with the expectation of men to be the primary breadwinners and heads of the family. Allan (2015) concedes with Cook by asserting that men construct their masculine identity against dominant notions of manhood such as economic provider, family responsibility and protector

ideals. It is therefore no surprise that men embody these masculine traits that have become identifiers of their masculinity. In this section of the study, I engage with masculinity performance through the lenses of provision as an important signifier of masculinity.

The role of being a provider is inescapable in the performance of masculinity as it affirms that a man must fulfil his duty and responsibility as a man and as expected by society (Sikweyiya et al., 2022). In their study investigating the role of provider amongst mine workers in the Northwest province, they found that the burden to provide is highly important in the process of masculinity construction.<sup>22</sup> Ampofo and Ampofo (2021:188) argue that in the current capitalist economy, masculine ideals are often associated with men being income earners and providers. The performance of this masculine role of provision also becomes a source of pressure and a measure of self-worth and masculinity. Elsewhere, Pyke (2020) asserts that the provider characteristic is the main characteristic that defines one's masculinity and affirms one's status as a man. Men who are unable to meet the responsibility of providing attract criticism not only from their peers but also from society, constantly reminding them of this responsibility. The amount of money or measure of provision also comes into account.

The discourse of being a provider also means that you must be able to provide fully to the needs of the family and your loved ones. Botha and Ratele (2014) elaborate on this reality by asserting that money becomes central in how men define themselves within the South African context. It is what makes men either powerful or subordinate (Ratele, 2015). Bhut'Omdala's sentiments regarding the amount of provision are that it is not enough for you just to make money – you must make enough to have your family taken care of. The inability to provide questions the masculinity of a man. According to societal norms, the role of being a provider is solely reserved for men as per patriarchal bargaining that takes place between men and women. Born-again men in this study demonstrate that this patriarchal discourse only happens within committed intermate relationships or in the context of marriage. Siphon, a 44-year-old married man, pastor and father alludes to the fact that regardless of the amount of money the women make, men are still expected to be the sole providers. Men cannot escape the role of being the provider and breadwinner. Sikweyiya et

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<sup>22</sup> Northwest is one of the nine provinces in South Africa.

al (2022) in their study exploring men's perception of provision in North-West also found that men are burdened by the expectation of being a provider and as long as you are a man, there is no way you can escape it. Interestingly, men in this study and existing research discuss this discourse within socio-economic lens but do not focus on other aspects of provision such as emotional and psycho-social support that men need to play in their children's life.

In their study investigating suicide among men in Ghana, Andoh-Arther et al. (2018) found that most men committed suicide due to their inability to meet the socially ascribed role of being a provider. The humiliation, emasculation, and shame of failing to live up to this expectation, led to men committing suicide. Ampofo and Ampofo (2021) further assert that failing to meet this social expectation, a man is emasculated, occupying a marginal masculine role in society, and this may contribute to issues of mental illness such as depression and anxiety. The issue of performing this role brings into context the issue of socio-economic status for many African black men. Failing to meet the expectation of this provider role has its implication in intermate partner relationship violence. Jewkes (2002) argues that men's unemployment often creates a vulnerable environment in romantic relationships where women are like to experience violence. This violence she argues is caused by the perceived emasculation brought on by their inability to provide. It is therefore not surprising that Born-again men attached their masculinity to the provision discourse and cannot escape it.

Spall (2014) in his study looking at the marriages of Angolan war veterans and how these war veterans navigated the shift from military discipline to life in a civilian society they no longer recognised, where money had become a dominant social value. Within this context, occupying a senior masculine role relied one being perceived as a capable provider for one's family and to exercise authority over one's wife and family. However, the veterans were faced with the reality of a weak economy, which meant that they could not make enough money to support their families and found other ways to fulfil their responsibilities. Spall (2014) highlights that these men were anxious or felt threatened that women might start earning more money than them, which would create problems within the household. Participants in this study expressed that the men would lose authority and wives would become disobedient as they would earn more money. Furthermore, a wife leaving them for

a richer man would serve as masculine failure. (Spall, 2014). In context, this means that men would not have control over and command obedience from their wives in the same way that they had when they earned money in the military. Therefore, being unemployed hinders a man's ability to fulfil his provider role and to affirm his masculinity as a man. Being unemployed as a man places you in a position of undesirability for female companions as you have no prospects of being a provider in an intimate relationship (Ampofo & Ampofo, 2021). Graaff and Heineken (2017) further assert that the high-income inequality and low economic development within the South African context negatively impact how men define themselves. Ratele (2014) asserts that these socio-economic issues influence the masculinity construction process and urge the understanding of the contextual lived experience of masculinity, especially in the African context. The finds in this study confirm that socio-economic status does influence how men view themselves.

Is a man still a man even if he can no longer provide for his family? This is one of the questions that we constantly grapple with when engaging the masculinity construction process in a post-colonial context. Scholars (Gibbs et al., 2014; Andoh-Arthur et al., 2018; Ampofo & Ampofo, 2021) argue that one cannot be considered a real man if they cannot provide, because they would have failed in fulfilling and successfully embodying the role of being a provider. However, the expectation and assertion that a man must be the provider within an intimate relationship and for their family is unattainable both short-term and long-term (Ampofo & Ampofo, 2021). Given the unstable economic landscape where a man cannot easily find a job, can easily lose a job, and where he could lose his business, they simply become victims of patriarchal pressure of meeting these expectations. We must recognise the difficulty of providing in today's economy, and the mental distress that comes with embracing the pressures and expectations of occupying the role of being a provider (Andoh-Arthur, 2018; Ampofo & Ampofo, 2021). Though men may resist this expectation of being a provider and explore other ways of enacting their masculinity, they anticipate that this expectation will not be different because it is what patriarchy expects of them (Ampofo & Ampofo, 2021). Andoh-Arthur (2018) connotes that a man's inability to provide being seen as a breach to patriarchal norm could be the reason behind men's suicidal behaviour. This provision expectation leaves a man with no agency in choosing how they enact and perform their masculinity and further perpetuates the ideology that a real man is the one who

provides. This provision seems to only be beneficial for everyone else except for men who do this provision. Other than fulfilling the patriarchal expectation of being a man, this discourse is a burden, with intangible patriarchal dividends.

Harris (2012, 2015), however, argues that these roles and expectations of masculinity did not exist before colonialism and the introduction of Christianity as part of the civilisation project for the missionaries. He asserts that gender in the African context was brought into the continent through western missionaries and colonisers (Harris, 2015). He further argues that under the colonisation project; men were forced into waged labour and women were taught that their place was to support their husbands and submit. Thus, the introduction of the patriarchal system that demanded that men be breadwinner/provider/protector and a superior gender. Elsewhere, he asserts that this gender ideology of men being the sole economic provider places men in a vulnerable position of oppression and pressure where they are the ones that are supposed to take care of everything financially even if their partner is working (Harris, 2012).

Ratele (2015) asserts that we should be concerned with issues of poverty, unemployment, and income inequality, and how these issues affect how we study men and boys for deeper contextualisation. We can never fully understand how an unemployed young man makes meaning of his masculinity without grounding our theory into deep contextualisation. That is how we get to understand the complexities of the masculinity construction process (Morrell & Swart, 2005). A perfect example of this deep contextualisation is the work of Malose Langa who journeyed with 32 boys from Alexandra, one of Johannesburg's largest townships, observing how they negotiate manhood and masculinity.<sup>23</sup>

He notes that young boys are often pressured to perform a certain type of masculinity to get affirmed as real boys or men. These young men differentiate between Tsotsi masculinity and academic masculinity. The Tsotsi masculinity is embodied and performed by boys who are unruly and troublesome, and not very smart when it comes to their books. They often give teachers problems. They perform their masculinity through acts of violence outside the classroom because that is where they feel their boyhood is affirmed. The violent performance

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of masculinity is how they affirm and embody their identity within that township context. The academic masculinity on the other hand, is attributed to boys who perform very well in their academics, are well behaved, seen as “teachers’ pets” and are not violent. They perform at their best within the classroom, not outside (Langa, 2020). This image is painted in this book, giving an indication of what these young men’s lives will look like in the future. He concludes that the process of negotiating these multiple and conflicting voices of masculinity is not easy (Langa, 2020:157).

The discourse of provision of is interconnect with that of leadership/headship. Born-again men associated with manhood was that of leadership and being the head of the household. They attributed this masculine attribute of being a land to the God given position of men being a leader that is also aligned to the discourse of responsibility. These discourses are informed by what van Klinken (2013), biblical manhood model.

Rojers (2018), in his paper titled “An Approach to Teaching My Son about Biblical Manhood”, reflects on how there have been multiple attempts to define masculinity by supporting or clinging to traditionally held perceptions of masculinity, and he offers an alternative lens in which to view masculinity: biblical masculinity. He defines a biblical man as a man who is a leader, lover, provider and protector. Being a protector in this sense is like to the role of being a provide, one must be able to protect their family from financial insecurity and create stability within the family. This protection becomes compromised when a man cannot provide.

Rojers (2018) argues that this definition of manhood acknowledges the reason why a man was created and the functional role that is attached to his manhood (Rogers, 2018). Van Klinken (2013) further describes biblical manhood as the heart of masculinity that is well meaning and has the responsibility to lead, provide and protect. The findings of this study show that being a leader is about taking action, and you must be noticeable as a leader and your position must be acknowledged within your household.

Within the Pentecostal context, the preoccupation of this God give position of leadership may not necessarily translate positively in the lives of born-again men. The initial space in which this leadership experience takes place is within your family context. Nadar (2009) in unpacking the complex implications of this discourse argues that Pentecostal and evangelical

men use discursive power to instil this discourse within their faith communities and cannot be questioned because “God said so” and has implication of imposing patriarchal ideals of masculinity. Owino (2012) further argues that it becomes complicated for men to construct their masculine ideals within this discourse as some of them do not necessarily have families to head and lead. However, spiritual leadership seems not to be a priority for men in this study and not referenced.

Dube(2018) argues that the lack of spiritual leadership on a person level for Pentecostal men may be attributed to the lack of engagement with African spirituality and traditions. She asserts that within the African culture, the head of the house (husband/father) is the spiritual practitioner who links the living with the dead, becoming the steward for ancestors (Dube, 2018:2). Though Nadar(2009) and Owino (2012) critically engage with this discourse within the religious landscape, they do not engage the spiritual aspects of leadership and what it entails. This type of leadership in the Pentecostal traditions is largely the responsibility of the pastor or faith leader who becomes the spiritual parent of the congregation (Dube, 2018) and does not apply to men providing this type of leadership in their homes. For Pentecostal men in this , leadership is only about male honour and being the patriarchal figure of the family that provides guidance, discipline and decision maker of the family. The conceptions and norms of biblical masculinity are similar to those of hegemonic masculinity. Biblical masculinity differs in that it uses the Hebrew Bible as point of reference in its construction of masculinity (Graybill, 2016). If we are to understand this leadership position as framed within the religio-cultural norm, we have to engage the power within the scholarship of men and masculinities in Africa.

Power is currency in the social order of things. Though Kirby and Van Klinken (2023) assert that power in masculinity studies is often understood in terms of the relation between men and women, it is also symbolic and essential in sustaining one’s masculine status. It comes through the roles of being a leader and head of the family – you cannot be a leader if you cannot provide for you family. To sustain the hierarchical order and the heteropatriarchal system as argued by Harris (2015), a man must occupy a superior position within the household and the community. The colonial system successfully entrenched the gender hierarchy within the African society and through culture, it has upheld the patriarchal system

that still functions today. From power perspective, leadership as reserved only for men is an economic-heteropatriarchal system that ensures order is maintained in society and that even though women and men are treated equally in the post-colonial context, they can never be equals. Power through economic means and leadership ensures male dominance, superiority, and control over women, children and other men (Harris, 2012).

The role of being a leader as a Christian man has often been attributed to providing leadership, not only for you family but also your community. It is part of your role as a man. We can never separate the role of being a provider and leader within the Christian faith landscape as these roles speak to the responsibility that a man has to his family (Sawin, 2013; Rogers, 2018). It has been argued by scholars (Owino, 2012; Dube, 2016) that Christian men, especially within the evangelical movements view leadership and provision as the ultimate signifiers of manhood. One of the prominent men's Christian movements is of the Mighty Men Conference, which was founded on the perceived crisis of masculinity, and called on men to take up their leadership positions in their families and society as God had intended them to (Owino, 2012). This is entrenched in Pentecostal and Evangelical Christian men: to be leaders (Owino, 2012; Van Klinken, 2013). The redemptive nature of Pentecostalism implies that while men can be liberated from patriarchal notions of masculinity (Chitando & Biri, 2013), influencing how they construct and perceive their role within their immediate environment where they are expected to be leader, their performance of this role also needs to change. The following extract unpacks the complexity of living up to the role of being a leader when a man cannot supplement it with being a provider.

*“So now, when women start now having economic power, then they start to challenge the kind of authority and then to men, that is encouraging some kind of inferiority because it feels that your power is taken way. And to man that is a challenge. (Mphikeleli, Eudy Simelane Memorial lecture, 2021 [3:16-33])<sup>24</sup>*

This change in economic power affects the power dynamics within the household. The woman now has the financial muscle within the home, challenging the patriarchal view of a man being the sole provider (Rogers, 2018). The religious notion of male leadership,

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eh3k6fPwxf8>. Eudy Simelane Memorial Lecture 2021. Accessed 3 January 2024.

informed by patriarchy, fails to consider the economic realities when imposing the role of leadership among men as an attribute of successful masculinity. The consequence of this perceived inferiority among men has been well documented by studies of men, masculinity and violence within the Christian faith landscape (Phiri, 2002; Seguino, 2011; Fakunmoju & Bammeke, 2017; Takyi & Lamptey, 2020). Nadar (2009) also problematises this ideal of leadership promoted within the Christian faith landscape, arguing that they reinforced patriarchy under the name of religion. If God said that the man is the head, no social structure can contend with this ideal, nor should it. It is the literal interpretation and understanding of such teachings which do not regard any social change as significant in deconstructing how we perceive gender roles.

This perception or belief of manhood among Christian men is influenced by Pauline teaching of leadership in Ephesians 5:22-23. Togarasei (2013) argues that these teachings of male headship and leadership produce toxic and dangerous masculinities while maintaining the structure of male dominance and female submission. Pauline teachings basically reinforce the traditional gender roles within a heterosexual marriage where the husband is the head of the wife (Ademiluka, 2021). This teaching resonates with the African patriarchal view of marital relationship where authority is granted to the husband, and the wife is to submit to his authority (Ademiluka, 2021). It clearly sets out the hierarchical order within the family structure. As Christ is the head of the church, so is the husband the head of his wife and family.

The findings are reflective of the patriarchal gender order within social institutions such as religion, which entrenches that a male person should maintain power and dominate within the household, while women occupy the submissive, subordinate roles. The perceived disobedience to this authority consequently puts women in a vulnerable position and exposed to violence. A study investigating violence within Christian homes found that women experienced violence from husbands who were pastors. The violence was a result of the perceived disobedience to the man's authority (Phiri, 2001). Dlamini (2023) further argues that such religio-cultural language perpetuates violence against women within the Christian faith landscape.

Understanding Pentecostal born-again men's masculinity construction cannot be done outside of the systematic backdrop of this heteropatriarchal framework. The findings of the study are elusive of dominant notions of masculinity that are informed by patriarchy. To grapple with this systematic, we must consider the argument made by the social construction of gender theorists who argue that gender is a social condition that is actively constructed by members of society and must be understood as a social structure (Connell, 2002). From a religious perspective, Thatcher (2011) asserts that religion typically uses essentialist views in understanding gender. This is also evident in the finding of the study where men understand gender from a binary view. By virtue of being male and assigned the masculine gender, men are privileged and are assigned by the patriarchal system which in turn informs how they should perform their masculine gender and creates expectations that they need to live up to (Morrel, 2001; Connell, 2002; Hooks, 2004; Langa, 2020).

The scholarship of men and masculinity within the African context has consistently highlighted the dominant notions of masculinity such as being a provider, protector, head, leader, dominant, superior, having multiple sexual partners and showing risk-taking behaviour as being embodied by men in different contexts to affirm their masculinity within a patriarchal society (Chitando, 2007; Ragnarsson et al., 2010; Jewkes et al., 2012; Ratele, 2013; Hunter et al., 2017; Jewkes & Morrel, 2018). Hooks (2004) asserts that patriarchy is invested in heteronormativity as a way of ensuring that the social hierarchical structure is not disrupted by emerging ideals of gender expressions and identities as this would disrupt the heteropatriarchal system that is in place. The finding of this study indicates that religious understanding and construction of masculinity is also informed by the systematic. Men in this study understood their masculinity according to the roles that have been assigned to them and that they are conditioned to perform. The roles of provider, leader, protector, and head of the family leave them no room to challenge or question the system they have been conditioned to. I could take the argument further by arguing that patriarchy is innate to men, and they are unable to understand themselves outside the patriarchal system.

*“I'm Zulu, so patriarchy is something that's in me, unfortunately. And I have to admit that there are certain parts of it that I do like. I do like the fact that a woman has to*

*look at me and treat me like her king, it's amazing, it feels great.” (Innocent, 26:02:08-19)<sup>25</sup>*

Innocent’s reflection on his relationship with patriarchy is beneficial for him because of the dividends he receives from it, and he would not necessarily challenge it. This is what Connell (2005) terms complicit masculinity – masculinity by which men benefit in terms of general social dominance, but not actively seeking to oppress women, and at the same time upholding hegemonic norms of masculinity. It is the privilege that men enjoy. Hentschel (2024) asserts that we are subconsciously influenced by patriarchy even though we may not necessarily want to engage with it. It is pervasive in all areas of our lives; it occupies us and affects us every day and everywhere. Men’s relationship with patriarchy is further complicated by their inability to challenge its norms and practices which are sometimes oppressive towards them too. To navigate this relationship, Hentschel (2024) maintains that it is sometimes easier to “go with the flow”, accept your position in society as a man, and keep quiet to ensure you continue benefiting from the patriarchal dividends. Hentschel (2024) insinuates that men cannot escape masculinity and cannot construct their identities outside of patriarchy.

The upholding of such dominant ideals of masculinity within the religious landscapes feeds into the heteropatriarchal system’s agenda of male dominance and superiority (Van Klinken, 2013; Gabaitse, 2020). Gabaitse (2020) argues that though Pentecostal masculinity is constructed within the contours of redemptive notions of masculinity, it is still framed within the heteropatriarchal system. Though born-again, they are still required to be patriarchal. These ideals continue to build up a system of econo-heteropatriarchy that is only enjoyed by men who ascribe to and perform heteropatriarchal notions of masculinity, and these men continue to enjoy the patriarchal dividends. The next section discusses the second theme – religious identity that born-again men have adopted and based their masculinity construction on, according to their faith traditions and beliefs.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eh3k6fPwkf8>. Eudy Simelane Memorial Lecture 2021. Accessed 3 January 2024.

### 5.3 Religious identity

Being born-again is a religious identity that believers in Pentecostalism have adopted. They live their lives according to these traditions of this religious identity. The construction of masculinity involves a set of complex factors that influences how men construct their masculine identity. These social factors include religion/church and media in its various forms. The identity of being born-again is a religious/ ideo-theological ideal and identity that is constructed on the Pentecostal doctrine of regeneration (Thornton, 2014; Lindhardt, 2015; Gabaitse, 2020). This religious identity requires men to denounce traditional notions of masculinity that are constructed through the concept of hegemonic masculinity as defined and explained in masculinity theory (Morrell, 2001; Connell, 2005). So how does one become born-again and what does it mean to be a born-again man?

The doctrine of being born again is expressed in John 3:3 and first Corinthians 5:17.<sup>26-27</sup> This forms the scriptural, biblical and theological base for the doctrine of being born-again. The above extract highlights what it means for men to be born-again and what it entails. Acts 2:38 perfectly summarises the doctrine by insisting that humankind repents from their sins. Gabaitse (2020) asserts that one of the Pentecostal traditions and beliefs teaches the salvation of people, and they must make a conscious decision to repent and become a new creation.<sup>28</sup> This born-again religious identity requires an individual to separate from sins, and day-to-day patterns and behaviours are expected to change (Gabaitse, 2020).

This regeneration or born-again religious identity invokes a certain understanding of the transformation that is supposed to take place when a man becomes born-again. Chitando and Chirongoma (2012) use the concept of redemptive masculinity to situate this ideo-theological masculine identity in gender and religion studies and offer this concept as a resource that can be used to reconfigure masculinities within the faith landscape. This regeneration, however, is a disservice to men in the process of masculinity construction, as it requires them to completely change how they perceive themselves. Studies exploring born-again men's

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<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered him, "Truly, Truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

<sup>27</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold the new has come.

<sup>28</sup> And then Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

reconstruction of their masculine identity show that men must constantly re-negotiate their own masculinity against hegemonic norms of masculinity and the expectations placed on them by culture and religion (Van Klinken, 2011; Lindhardt, 2015; Thornton, 2018). Reflecting on masculinity from a Hebrew Bible, Graybill (2016) asserts that masculinity within the Hebrew Bible is complicated and a shifting negotiation between the body, sex, sexuality, and performance. The findings of the study represent the shifting of masculinity and how it is performed in contemporary society by born-again men, invoking a specific type of masculinity: Pentecostal masculinity.

Pentecostal masculinity, based on religious identity, brings on another complicating layer in the masculinity construction process. According to Lindhardt (2015), conversion to Pentecostalism and becoming born-again means that men must break away from the traditional masculine behaviour such as aggression, multiple sexual partners, infidelity, consumption of alcohol and other substances, making it difficult for them to maintain social network. Graybill (2016) argues that hegemonic masculinity in the Hebrew Bible is also aggressive, domineering to others and is very much concerned with male honour. The embodiment of masculinity from the Hebrew biblical perspective and Pentecostal doctrine of regeneration, entails a specific form of embodiment, yet it is framed within a deeply flawed heteropatriarchal system that celebrates hegemonic notions of masculinity.

### **5.3.1 New lifestyle/culture**

As argued by scholars (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012; Lindhardt, 2015; Gabaitse, 2020), the embodiment of lifestyle change is symbolic of the new identity that men have adopted, insinuating that transformation and redemption have taken place. Lindhardt (2015) asserts that after conversion, Pentecostal men are drawn to a private lifestyle that is more family orientated and commit to the nuclear family ideal and his role as the breadwinner or provider.

The behavioural change mentioned by men sampled for this study speaks to the redemptive nature of being born-again, forsaking the traditional masculine roles and behaviours. Van Klinken (2011), in his study in Zambia, details how conversion or being born-again changed many areas in the male participants' lives. One of the dominant themes in these conversion narratives is that of becoming a responsible man. This theme is also evident in Lindhardt's (2015) study of Tanzanian born-again men and how they navigate and negotiate their

masculine identity. These studies suggest that within Pentecostal circles, men gain respect, honour, and prestige by becoming responsible men and living up to this expectation of being a responsible father and husband. It is not surprising that even participants in this study believe that true manhood or masculinity or the status of being a man is limited to those men who have proven to be responsible.

The notion of responsibility as an embodiment and expectation of masculinity must be explored through the lenses of the dominant notions of masculinity as discussed above. Responsibility for born-again men encompasses the successful embodiment of the characteristics of masculinity such as being a provider and protector (Enderstein & Boonzaier, 2015; Meyer, 2017). The discourse of provision is embedded in power and control (Meyer, 2017). With wealth comes power and with power comes the ability to dominate. Meyer (2017) also argues that this discourse is further perpetuated by the type of employment that one has, giving men power and control over women. The valuing of a man as sole provider also perpetuates patriarchal gender inequitable norms that place women in a vulnerable position where they might experience violence (Sikweyiya et al. 2022). Protection is an embodied experience and expectation that men must fulfil; it is bestowed and entitled (Meyer, 2017). The patriarchal connotation regarding protection is that a man protects all that he has and his family. However, studies of intimate partner and sexual violence (Jewkes, 2002; Phiri, 2002; Matthews, Abrahams & Jewkes, 2011) prove that men have failed to protect those that they are meant to protect. Considering these studies and the prevalence of violence against women, the notion of protection as a masculine trait needs to be deconstructed critically in conversation with men as the perpetrators of such violence.

As a fundamental aspect of biblical masculinity that requires men to demonstrate and embody this characteristic in their everyday lives, responsibility cannot be understood as an inherent male trait. There is also pressure to live up to this responsibility that has been imposed on men by religio-cultural norms and patriarchy. Lindhardt (2015) asserts that men in Africa often struggle with the expectations of masculinity that have been placed on them and that they were socialised into. Nadar (2009) and Owino (2012) show that the provision of biblical masculinity without a proper model fosters ideologies of palatable patriarchy

within the Christian faith landscape. These ideologies and norms hinder the development of an alternative and gender-equitable masculinity (Dube, 2016; Gabaitse, 2020).

The ideo-theological identity of being born-again prides itself on providing an alternative form of masculinity that is life-giving and brings about transformation among men. However, the framework in which this identity is framed is deeply informed by the patriarchal notions of masculinity and colonial understanding of what it means to be men. Before being born-again, men in this study articulated embodied hegemonic norms of masculinity such as having multiple sexual partners and drinking alcohol – ideals of male superiority and dominance (Morrell, 2001; Gibbs et al., 2014). They were worldly. Having been born-again, religion (Pentecostalism in this instance) reconstructed what it means to be a man according to the doctrinal beliefs which are not only informed by scripture but also by patriarchy.

For example, toxic masculinity became a term associated with men being sexually promiscuous, which is dangerous masculine behaviour that became a common denominator in the rise of gendered pandemics, specifically gender-based violence and HIV (Haddad, 2005; Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012). Being custodians of the moral fibre of society and responsible for the maintenance of the heteropatriarchal system (Mbabazi, 2020), religion sought to reconstruct a different kind of manhood that will seek to address and liberate men from toxic masculine behaviour, and the redemption project within the Christian faith landscape began. Though a conceptualised resource for constructing positive and life-giving masculinities (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012), the concept has been designed to maintain male dominance and superiority among Christian men by prescribing that a man must be a provider, protector, head, and leader of the family, this does not eliminate patriarchy, much less gender inequality.

The notion of a man being the head of the household, just as Christ is the head of the church, perpetuates the ideology that a man was meant to be a leader by creation. Nadar (2009) on her reflection of the Mighty Men Conference, argues that masculine power is maintained through oppositional, relational and discursive power within the religious landscape to legitimise male superiority and dominance. She explains that relational and oppositional power are belief systems that promote hierarchical ideologies that make it obligatory for men

to be heads and leaders in their homes and communities. Furthermore, discursive power refers to the everyday language that maintains the binary oppositions of men and women (Nadar, 2009). She asserts that this is palatable patriarchy, which is often hard to contend with because it is hidden behind discursive power. These dominant religious discourses are maintained through discursive power and entrenched in Pentecostal-Charismatic and Evangelical men's conferences (Owino, 2012, 2020; Ngcobo, 2021).

The findings of this study show that born-again men adhere to these patriarchal ideologies of masculinity and share in the belief of male superiority and female submission. The Pauline teachings as argued by Togarasei (2012) further perpetuate this embodiment of masculinity among Christian men, leaving them with no option but to be patriarchal. Chitando (2007) was optimistic in his writing regarding men giving up their patriarchal power for a more equitable and gender-equal society. Men are not willing to give up their patriarchal privileges afforded to them by culture and religion, because it comes with dividends (Connell, 2005).

Still within the confines of oppositional power, men are also expected to be providers. Research has shown that the provision role is central to men's ability to maintain their masculine identity (Gibbs et al., 2014; Ampofo & Ampofo, 2021). The expectation for men to perform this role is unattainable both long-term and short-term, given the shaky economic landscape of the African context. The consequences of not living up to this patriarchal expectation have been argued to create mental health problems such as stress and depression, due to the shame of failing as man (Andoh-Arthur et al., 2018). Though the projects of restoring masculinity according to God's purpose for men are challenging the perceived crisis of masculinity within the religious landscape (Owino, 2012), it oppresses men and takes away their agency. Reality dictates that men cannot live up to the patriarchal standards of masculinity that have set up a system to ensure male dominance. Professor Zethu Matebeni, in her 2021 Eudy Simelane lecture, reflects that men do not live up to this standard and many fail to meet this patriarchal expectation of masculinity.

Although born-again men have found redemption in Christ, and have reconstructed their masculinity according to Pentecostal norms, they remain patriarchal. Gabaitse (2020) further argues that although Pentecostal masculinity is constructed on the contours of Pentecostalism, it is still framed within a patriarchal system. Whether born-again men

embody their masculine identity publicly or privately (Lindhardt, 2015), they can never escape the patriarchal expectations of manhood. Pentecostal churches have not completely denounced patriarchy or patriarchal notions of superiority and dominance; they have reinterpreted it in the discourse of male responsibility and servant leadership (Chitando, 2007; Burchardt, 2018). If it had denounced patriarchy, the gender equality programme would have started in the church, it would have been vocal against issues of gender-based violence and child abuse, among other social ills. It has produced what Nadar (2009) frames palatable patriarchy. Giving up their patriarchal privileges would essentially mean giving up power, which will then disrupt the patriarchal system that has established hierarchical order, leading to the collapse of patriarchal discourses of gender and human sexuality.

The redemptive and transformative nature of Pentecostalism and the ideo-theological identity of being born-again push men into adopting life-giving and responsible masculinity (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012; Chitando & Biri, 2013). If these men express that being born-again reminded them of and restored them to their position as responsible men, it is an indication that they were not as responsible as they ought to have been according to God's standards. In this new lifestyle or culture of being born-again, men embody their God-given responsibility and positive and life-giving notions of masculinity and are saved from hegemonic masculinity, but their notions of masculinity are framed within heteronormativity and patriarchy.

#### **5.4 The collapse of culture and religion**

Religion and culture are social institutions that influence how identities are constructed and informed. Kirby and Van Klinken (2023) assert that religion is one of the key social sites in which men and masculinities within the African context navigate and negotiate the reconfiguration of their gender identities and positions as men in society. They further argue that masculinities and religion must be centred on three themes: power, politics, and performance. Power in relations between men and women, power over other men, and how religion shapes these dynamics. The politics of masculinity refers to the mobilisation and struggles where the meaning of masculine gender is at issues and with it, men's position in gender relations (Kirby & Van Klinken, 2023:596). Religion finds itself entangled in the politics of masculinity where it to address and overcome the social failures of traditional

forma of masculinity by promoting the ideals of born-again masculinity (Van Klinken, 2013) Performance also allows for the discussion of the role of religious beliefs, culture, traditions, and rituals in the everyday navigation of the male identity and the negotiation of masculine norms (Kirby & Van Klinken, 2023:567). These three themes are expressed in a variety of ways and they do not necessarily translate to born-again man's lived experiences.

In this context, men's identities and how they live their lives are tied to religious beliefs and a divine being in whom they fashion their behaviour. For Pentecostal men, power is linked to the heteropatriarchal ideology of leadership in which they believed is a God given role to be leaders. In their explanation of power, Kirby and Van Klinken (2023) assert that the power them dictates gender relations between men and women. Men in this study understood power as having authority and dominating over the family affairs and is maintained with the religious model of biblical manhood (Owino, 2012) of how men should perform this leadership role. However, this power manifests its way a threatening man, discursive power (Nadar, 2009) where the man's authority cannot be question and must be embraced because God has said so. The masculine politics theme systematically places unmarried born-again men in a subordinate position for two reasons. Firstly, they have not proven their male sexuality, thus not living up to the masculine expectation heterosexuality and secondly, their religious singleness complicates this process and essentially having their male sexuality questioned. Performance on the other is complicated for born-again men where they have to negotiate their masculine performance between two worlds of religion and culture. Born-again men essentially have given up their cultural aspect of masculine embodiment and chose to perform that is aligned with their Pentecostal beliefs.

For the discussion of the collapse of religion and culture in the process of masculinity construction as per findings of this study, it is important that we are cognisant of the colonial influence that clouds the understanding of masculinity, religion and culture. Bertolt (2018:03) asserts that African society cannot be understood outside of coloniality or the colonial context. This implies that identities have largely been influenced by the colonial system, which introduced the heteronormative understanding of both gender and sexuality. Harris (2015) and Tamale (2013) argue that before colonialism concepts of gender and sexuality were fluid and society did not dictate how gender is performed or ascribe gender

roles. The introduction of Christianity by missionaries challenged the religious practices and beliefs that indigenous African practiced in their daily lives. It introduced a hierarchical, patriarchal gender system that constructed gender and sexuality in binary identities of masculinity and femininity, the reduction of women's roles to a private sphere while the man enters the labour force to provide for their families, and the rejection of non-heterosexual identities through the institutionalisation of heterosexism (Bertolt, 2018:3).

Within the scholarship of masculinities and religions, Harris (2015) asserts that colonisation and Christianity, along with Islam, influenced how society order was created, and the introduction of gender roles. Christians believed in the supreme God while African religion believed in both the supreme God and ancestral spirits (Bawa, 2019:56). It has been argued that missionaries through Christianity insisted that converts do not practice rituals related to connecting with ancestral spirits, as Christianity associated these with evil and demonic spirits (Harris, 2015; Bawa, 2019). As part of the African tradition, ancestral spirits are considered gods and believed to intercede for the family in the spiritual realm. Interestingly, when asked about cultural influence in the masculinity construction process, the findings show that men often refer to culture through ancestral worship, which is prohibited for a convert.

According to African religion or culture, the oldest male in the family is the one who is allowed the role to be the family spokesperson or representative concerning rituals which include ancestral worship. Anderson (1993) asserts that ancestors are believed to be those who have died, who exist in an undefined or unknown place which the living being has no access to. The ancestors are appeased with rituals such as the slaughtering of goats or cows, and traditional beer. This process, however, no longer applies to born-again men as they have converted to Pentecostalism and a lifestyle that is centred in and around Christ. This puts born-again men in a predicament as they must give up their roles as spokespersons and not partake in a tradition that is central to African society and spirituality.

This is where the disconnect between culture and religions begins to unfold. Pentecostalism requires that born-again men abandon the practises and rituals associated with worshipping any unknown god and requires African people to forsake their communication with ancestral spirits. This not only changes and challenges social life for indigenous people; it also

connotes that traditional gods are inferior to the supreme God introduced through Christianity (Bawa, 2019). For men in this study, forsaking traditional gods and spiritual ancestors, and converting to “*white man’s*” religion meant that they lose their place in society and within the family.

“White man’s religion” symbolises and is indicative of African people recognising the impact of Christianity brought to Africa by the white man. This statement also speaks to the process that African people go through when they become converts, forsaking African traditional religious practices that have been used by communities to make sense of who they are, and the rituals which acted as a passage to communication with their ancestral spirits (Harris, 2015; Bawa, 2019). The construct of “white man’s” religion originates from how Christianity was introduced in Africa and the consequential implications that required African to disregard their religion for this Christian God. One could argue that colonialism is alive and still functioning today through social institutions that regulate and police how we do religion. Furthermore, the colonial introduction of Christianity advocated for an individualistic lifestyle rather than community and ensured that it isolated those beliefs systems that are not in accord with culture (Bawa, 2019). As demonstrated by Siphon in the above statement, becoming a born-again Christian is an individual decision that a person makes, independent of the community.

According to Pentecostal faith traditions, men must display biblical manhood and masculinity by embodying roles of being a leader, provider, and protector, and a responsible family man (Owino, 2012; Ngcobo, 2021). Culture, on the other hand, expects men to display dominant characteristics of hegemonic masculinity and perform their masculine roles as described and imposed by social norms. Burchardt (2018) asserts that South African men are confronted with traditional masculinity and liberated/transformed masculinity, these two often conflicting with each other. This study found that there is a collapse in culture and religion, as participants often negotiated their masculinity against these two social constructions of masculinity to try make sense of who they are. This was particularly difficult for *Siphon*, *Sibusiso* and *Lihle* who are pastors and had to give up their familial positions for the sake of religion. arguably, them choosing to give up their familial positions if influenced by the solo religious experience of a Pentecostal encounter and conversion

which is an individual spiritual journey (Kaunda, 2016; Manglos, 2010). This Pentecostal experience to a certain extent alienates these men from communal bonding which largely happens during cultural and traditional events and rituals. They are now forced into creating their own religious communities in which they lament on their chosen Pentecostal life. Lindhardt (2015) argues that one of the being a Pentecostal man and a man of God, requires that one perform their masculinity in private and lead their lives in a private manor. The conflicting beliefs of culture and religion in their lives forces them into this private life to completely disregard the lives they had before becoming born-again.

Through its indigenous knowledge system and practices, culture has clearly defined who a man is and how men should embody their masculinity (Mfecane, 2020). It has dictated that for Xhosa men, as a rite of passage to manhood, an initiation process has to begin, giving a man status and access to participate in cultural rituals and practices that are only reserved for men (Mfecane, 2020; Scott, 2021). Becoming a Christian not only means that one believes the cultural practices and rituals are worldly, but also that a born-again man must not partake in such practices. This is one of the contentions that Mfecane (2020) grapples with arguing for decolonial thinking when it comes to indigenous practices that inform identity construction for African men.

Social gender norms have prescribed the “correct” and acceptable embodiment of masculinity. Previous studies engaging masculinity construction of Pentecostal born-again men have indicated that men often struggle with cultural, traditional and religious expectations of masculinity. Culture expects men to behave in a way that embodies hegemonic masculinity, having multiple sexual partners, partaking in social drinking, and being involved in cultural rituals. Being a born-again man prohibits this kind of behaviour and men are expected to embody liberated and transformed masculinity within the Pentecostal traditions (Burchardt, 2018).

There is a disconnect between religio-cultural expectations of masculinity and the lived reality of being a born-again man. According to the hegemonic construction of masculinity, masculinity is defined according to social ideals of what it means to be a man (Morrel, 2001), and men are expected to embody and perform this gender identity according to this script. This hegemonic masculinity script is informing the heteropatriarchal traditional masculine

behaviour such as aggression, risky sexual behaviour, dominance, power, and non-feminine behaviour (Connell, 2005; Jewkes & Morrell, 2018). However, Pentecostalism provides room for men to embody their feminine energy by requiring them as born-again men to break away from the hegemonic norms of masculinity and embrace a more responsible, family-orientated masculinity (Van Klinken, 2012; Lindhardt, 2015).

The patriarchal systematic realities do not give men the liberty to embrace an alternative form of masculinity without some consequences. The feminine embodiment and the radical behavioural change have placed born-again men in a precarious position as they navigate their masculine construction process and reconciling the two worlds. Again, this is where the masculine politics as mentioned by Kirby and van Klinken (2023) begin, where born-again men are not considered manly because they are domesticated and regarded as useless because they cannot practice African spirituality which connects them to their ancestors, thus not having a cultural positioning where their opinions matter. It is evident that though Pentecostal men have given up their cultural aspect of self, they still long and mourn for that aspects of their lives where they are in touch with their African rituals and practices.

The collapse of religion and culture within the African context has been largely linked to women's oppression through religio-cultural discourses that promote male dominance and superiority and gender inequality (Phiri, 2001; Rwafa, 2018; Dlamini, 2023). The religio-cultural ideologies of masculinity that are informed by patriarchy have conflicting expectations of masculinity. Lindhardt (2015) argues that Pentecostal men must embody their masculinity through Pentecostal norms, traditions and beliefs. However, these beliefs shun the traditional norms and practices of indigenous people, such as communicating with spiritual gods or ancestors, which have defined African culture.

Mandla's sentiments regarding his positionality as a born-again man who does not ascribe to traditional religious and cultural practices that necessitate ancestral worship as part of his life, have led to him being socially excluded by religion from communal practices of culture. Culture has also excluded him due to his ascription to a "white" man's religion. Harris (2015) argues that Christianity's rejection of any cultural or traditional practices has negatively impacted how men navigate their masculinity construction and identity. The collapse of culture and religion is brought on by these different ideals, expectations and practices on

masculinity. Culture expects men to uphold traditional family values and the practices that come with being the head of the family and the oldest son in the family, together with the responsibilities that are attached to being a man. This responsibility, as shown in the study findings, is that of being a spokesperson that must communicate with the ancestral spirits (Harris, 2015; Bawa, 2019). This practice is essential for a man to be respected not only by his own family but also the community at large. Similarly, a man is shunned by his own family and community if he is unable to meet the prescribed role of being a provider, (Harris, 2015; Ampofo & Ampofo, 2021), the man who cannot live up to this cultural role and expectation is not considered a man, according to cultural norms.

Christianity – Pentecostalism in this context – expects converts to completely turn away from any cultural or traditional rituals and practices as these are considered evil and demonic (Bawa, 2019). Pentecostal expectation of men to relinquish their African religion and customs strips them of their African identity and culture that has shaped who they are as human. For example, *Sbusiso* who is a Xhosa men expressed disappointment how he has parted ways with customs that shaped him into a man. Born-again men are now expected to embody their masculinity and leadership role by not only being responsible husbands and fathers, but also embodying godly or biblical masculinities (Owino, 2012). Lindhardt (2015) and Van Klinken (2013) assert that Pentecostal masculinity emphasises that men must be responsible, both privately and publicly. Because of their religious beliefs and traditions, born-again men are finding it difficult to navigate this landscape and their masculine identity, because both religion and culture have different and conflicting expectations which they cannot live up to and are therefore systematically being othered within their own context.

## **5.5 Sexuality and embodiment**

According to Shefer, Kruger and Schepers (2015), male sexuality is to be understood in terms of men's performance of masculinity where hegemonic masculinity has been perceived as key affirmation of a man's masculine status. Hegemonic masculinity by virtue excludes or discourages any feminine behaviour among young men and boys (Connell, 2005; Ratele, 2014, 2017). Pentecostalism has been largely associated with feminism as it is perceived to "domesticate" men and transform them to becoming family-orientated and helping in the household (Chitando & Biri, 2013; Lindhardt, 2015). The findings in the study show that

being a born-again man is often associated with being effeminate and being perceived as a homosexual, since one cannot date or be engaged in a sexual relationship. The body and sexuality cannot be separated when talking about gender and embodiment. Connell (2005) uses the concept of the body inescapable in her theorisation of masculinity, arguing that the body is central in the process of masculinity construction and embodiment, as it is enacted in the body. From a body theological perspective, it argues that the body is a tool of embodiment, a tool in which we experience the world around us and how we relate to God, and a site of gender performance (Butler, 1990; Nelson, 1992). The body and how it is perceived also becomes central in how born-again men perform and embody their masculinity in contemporary society. Graybill (2016) argues that the masculine body in the Hebrew Bible is often feminised and uses Moses and his body as an example.<sup>29</sup> After an encounter with God, he had such radiance that the people could not look at him, so he had to put on a veil.<sup>30</sup> The feminising of born-again men is a result of men embodying masculinity differently from the hegemonic norm.

In this study, participants expressed the pressure to embody hegemonic masculinity and sexual identity to affirm their masculinity, but because of their faith traditions, any talk or behaviour exploring a different sexuality is prohibited. An essential element of transitioning from boyhood to manhood rests upon boys demonstrating their sexual identity, becoming sexually active and earn the right to be man (Graybill, 2016; Palmer, 2016). Though the performance of masculinity does not exclusively depend on sexual practice and activity, it is considered an essential element in masculinity performance (Graybill, 2016). Morrell (2007) further asserts that although exploring sexuality among boys and girls was encouraged among the Zulu-speaking people, no sexual penetration was allowed. It was through a process of *Ukusoma*.<sup>31</sup> This non-penetrative sexual exploration is not encouraged within the Pentecostal context as it constitutes as a sin of sexual immorality.

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<sup>29</sup> Moses was a prophet in the Old Testament that led the children of Israel out of Egypt and slavery to the promised land, as instructed by God.

<sup>30</sup> A veil is a garment that a bride wears on her wedding day, covering her face. Religiously, it is perceived to be a symbol of purity.

<sup>31</sup> *Ukusoma* is when a boy and a girl, in their exploration of sexuality, have non-penetrative sex. The boy would ejaculate between the thighs of the girl (Morrell, 2007:16).

The perceived feminine attributes among born-again men put them in a position where they are unable to partake in this essential rite of passage to manhood, having their masculinity questioned. Langa (2020) asserts that in his study of masculinity construction, adolescent boys understood the need to behave in a manner that would make their peers question their sexuality and the stereotypes associated with being perceived as gay. This is a contentious point for young men who are born-again as they constantly negotiate this transitioning without the right of passage of sexual activity. Langa (2020) further asserts that young adolescent boys discriminated against gay boys to maintain their straight masculinity.

For the young men in this study, the issue was the risk of being perceived as gay and feeling the need to conform to the hegemonic male sexuality ideal to prove their manhood. The perceived need to conform is a result of the emphasis that is placed on a male-sexed body and the shared religio-cultural value of virility to affirm their masculinity (Graybill, 2016). Plummer (2016) also notes that there is pressure on young men to conform by demonstrating their masculinity through performance of sexual desirability and through sexual performance.

This finding is affirmed by Shefer and colleagues, arguing that male sexuality is affirmed by having multiple sexual partners and impregnating a woman. These discourses of fixed or forced heterosexual masculinity and being monitored by peers make it difficult for young men to consider an alternative or even challenge hegemonic discourse of gender and sexuality (Shefer et al., 2015; Langa, 2020). Though sexuality was not something that participants openly spoke about, they referred to it when asked about their vulnerability. Celibacy and the lack of sexual activity in born-again men also feminise them because of the perceived inability to penetrate, or the absence thereof.

Steward (2016), referencing masculinity in the Roman empire, asserts that in masculinity in the Christian faith landscape there are three distinct factors that produce manliness: Avoidance of feminine behaviour; that a man must be penetrative and must always protect his body from being penetrated; and men must demonstrate bravery through aggression (Steward, 2016). Hlatshwayo (2012) further asserts that to be male is to be a penetrator. The act of penetration reinforces and affirms a man's masculine status. Wines (2013) concedes that penetration is an active role that has been ascribed to men and outlines the different

modes of penetration: vaginal, anal or oral. Penetration is an important part of demonstrating masculine virility and confirmation of one's sexual identity, heterosexual identity in the case of this study's participants. The expectation of masculinity to penetrate is linked to a man's capacity to sexually perform and spreading of his seed for procreational purposes (Fleming et al, 2016). It is assumed that men use their penis to penetrate because of their biological make up. However, unmarried Pentecostal men have not lived up to this expectation as they do not have intimate partner relationships and no offsprings prove their male virality and capacity to sexually perform. The conditions in which this penetration is supposed to happen is within the boundaries of heterosexuality, in an intimate partner relationship for not only sexual pleasure but also performance of male sexuality. It is then safe to assume that any act of penetration without the intention of procreation and outside of the institution of marriage can be regarded as wastage of male seed.

Shefer et al (2015) and Langa (2020) in their respective studies have shown that the rite of passage from boyhood and manhood is through affirming one male sexuality, that is engaging in heterosexual sex. However, born-again men are forced into singlehood and therefore could not affirm their male sexuality. Lavender-Scott (2023) asserts that their different types of singlehood, one being social singlehood defined as not being in a significant romantic relationship that is not acknowledged by both friends and family. In this context, born-again men are forced into religious singleness which can be defined as not being in significant romantic relationship due to religious beliefs and norms. This religious singlehood not only hinders born-again men from seeking out romantic relationships, but it also hinders them from affirming their male sexuality and identity, essentially marginalizing and othering them.

In this study, Pentecostal men's bodies appear to be "othered".<sup>32</sup> Morrell (2007) offers a different argument regarding masculinity: the attainment of manhood within the Zulu culture regardless of one's religious' identity. He argues that a sexually matured body does not

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<sup>32</sup> The concept of otherness has been used in queer studies to explain the discursive process that heteronormativity and heteropatriarchy have used to stigmatise those whose gender expression and sexual identity fall outside of the heteronormative constructions of gender and sexuality. Jones, L., 2018. *'I'm not proud, I'm just gay': Lesbian and gay youths' discursive negotiation of otherness. Journal of Sociolinguistics, 22(1), pp.55-76.*

qualify penetration is an essential element of masculinity, Morrell shows that this active role is also regulated by social norms. Given the context in which Pentecostal men are subversive to the hegemony, it can be argued that their abstinence is in line with the religio-cultural sanctions of attaining manhood. One for entry into manhood. A man becomes a man when he has successfully negotiated bride price and been initiated – only then can penetration occur (Morrell, 2007). In line with Graybill (2016) argument about the feminization of masculinity on the Hebrew bible, the feminization of Pentecostal men should not come as surprise. Their abstinence from sexual intercourse goes against masculine norms of penetration and multiple sexual partnership (Fleming et al, 2016; Menseh, 2021) is further complicated by their singlehood because they have not yet proven their male sexuality.

The fear of being perceived as gay among the participants in the studies by both Shefer et al. (2015) and Langa (2020), is a manifestation of homophobia. I use the word homophobia in this instance not to refer to prejudice or discrimination against the queer community, but to refer to Kimmel's (1996) definition of homophobia as a central organising principle of our cultural definition of manhood. He further asserts that homophobia is the fear that other men would unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not meet the homogenic standards of masculinity and that we are not real men (1996: 65). Ratele (2014) argues that African hegemonic masculinity is often in conflict with non-heteronormative sexualities as they present an alternative type of masculine ideal. For this study, born-again men present a non-heteronormative sexuality by not embodying the sexual identity that has often been associated with hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, as per inference by Kimmel (1996), born-again men have been emasculated because of their religious identity and their non-conformity to male sexual identity – because they do not measure up to the hegemonic standard of male masculinity, they are not real men. This ideal of hegemonic masculinity can never be achieved and men cannot live up to this standard, because the masculine identity is fluid and often changing and embodied differently (Graybill, 2016; Ratele, 2022). They even go to the extreme of getting married when they are not ready, as expressed by Themba in the above extract. It is therefore not surprising that born-again men's embodiment of their masculinity conflicts with hegemonic norms of masculinity.

This homophobia is not completely unwarranted. Masculinity construction in the Hebrew Bible is unstable. As highlighted above, the body is a tool of embodiment and a site of gender performance. In her exploration of the body in the Hebrew Bible, Graybill (2016), considers the bodies of the prophets as sites of unstable masculinity performance as they do not have autonomy over their own bodies. Wines (2023) further asserts that biblical masculinity as present in the Hebrew Bible is under the authority of God, and prophets are subjected to submitting their bodies to God as vessels to spread His message. In the hierarchy of masculinities (Connell, 2005), these prophets are considered to embody subordinate masculinity. According to specific gender relations, there is dominance and subordination between groups of men. Connell (2005) further asserts that this subordination is often directed towards homosexual men, which, according to the patriarchal gender ideology, needs to be expelled and is assimilated to femininity. Caught in the operation of embodied masculinities within a discursive framework, these born-again men are experiencing the tension between heterosexual dominance and homosexuality or gay subtext and the fragmentation of their masculine identity (Hearn, 2012). This reinforces the argument that hegemonic masculinity is not stable, compared to and against other masculinities (Graybill, 2016; Langa, 2020; Pyke, 2020).

In the embodiment of male sexuality, and the negotiation of one sexual identity, we must also consider the emotional aspects attached to embodying a certain body type and hegemonic masculinity. Langa (2020:26) asserts that it is important to understand the emotional costs and contradictions that occur for boys negotiating hegemonic and non-hegemonic forms of masculinity. The findings of this study embody the subversive masculine gender norm through behavioural change and strategies that align with their religious beliefs to challenge and reject the dominant hegemonic masculinity.

Considering the multiplicity of masculinities within any given society, specifically a patriarchal context such as Africa, we cannot ignore the existence of non-heteronormative masculinities that exist (Ratele, 2011; Tamale, 2013; Harris, 2015). Religion and culture have systematically, through oppositional power, discursive power, and gender roles, entrenched heteronormativity and perpetuated the discrimination of queer identities and sexualities within the African context. Religion, through discourse of reproduction and

essential view of gender and sex, has conditioned not only society but also men that the only way to embody male sexuality is through heterosexual relations (Maake et al., 2023). The policing of born-again men's sexuality sustains the idea of heterosexual male identity, which is conceptualised through having multiple sexual partners and having gone through the transitioning phase from boyhood to manhood, which is achieved by engaging in heterosexual sex (Shefer et al., 2015; Langa, 2020). Male sexual identity not only confirms one's masculine identity; it also helps heterosexual men maintain their hegemonic roles and position in society. The representation of masculinity in the Hebrew Bible forces us to reconsider the embodiment of masculinity, especially for born-again men. Graybill (2016) and Wines (2016) showcase feminine masculinity that exists in the Hebrew Bible, especially in the Old Testament prophets. Being subjected to God's will and authority essentially takes away born-again men's agency in their enactment of masculinity, because they are under control of a supreme God. If Moses can be depicted through the feminine representation of wearing a veil when presenting God's message to the people of Israel and was not shunned for this feminine embodiment, there is no religio-cultural standing of rejecting feminine traits among men. Furthermore, the church being referred to as the bride of Christ, connotes that femininity among men is something that should not be frowned upon.<sup>33</sup> However, Pentecostal fear of the erosion of traditional family ideals and the perceived masculinity crisis (Owino, 2012) has perpetuated the narrative that queer men are not real men as they are penetrated by a full-blooded penis (Ratele, 2011), and penal penetration is expected to be between a man and woman.

This fear of non-heteronormative sexual embodiment has created homophobia – not only internal homophobia among born-again men but also religio-cultural homophobia. Scott's (2021) reflection on queerness and Xhosa culture speaks to this homophobia. Homophobia is disguised as preservation of culture and religious discourses of gender and sexuality. It becomes central then to understand body politics in the construction of gendered identity, and the role of religion and culture in influencing how these gendered identities are embodied and performed within society. The pervasiveness of cisheteronormativity in contemporary society also fuels this homophobia towards gender-diverse or non-heteronormative sexual

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<sup>33</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

identity. Matebeni, Monro and Reddy (2018) assert that gender variance in Africa is constructed by compulsory gender binarism, patriarchy and heterosexualism. The findings of this study indicate that cismasculinity is the rule and not the exception for men. However, cisheteronormativity or cisgender is not sustainable in the everyday practices and the lived experiences of masculinity. In their book titled *Queer in Africa: LGBTQI identities, citizenship, and activism*, Matebeni, Monro and Reddy (2018:3) use the term “queer” to call into question the binary gendered system that constitute identity. This questioning of the gender binary system allows us to explore the concept of queer masculinities which provides us with an opportunity to construct a masculine identity, that is an alternative which is not confined within the gender binary system and cisheteronormativity.

The redemptive masculinity project, through Pentecostalism (Chitando & Kilonzo, 2018) and the different embodiment of masculinity by these born-again men as detailed in the Hebrew Bible (Graybill, 2016), construct a different kind of masculinity, an alternative to the hegemony. Notwithstanding the argument made by Lindhardt (2015), arguing that men in Africa generally struggle to live up to the hegemonic masculine norms and the contestation between hegemonic masculinity and subordinate masculinity within the Christian faith landscape.

Redemptive masculinity as theoretical framework redefines traditional notions of masculinity within the confines of religion. However, masculinities cannot be redeemed within the current framework unless we challenge the framework to be inclusive and supportive of alternative expressions of masculinity outside of the cis-heteronormative. There is a need to explore the contours of queer theology that is centred on four sources; scripture, tradition, reason and experience (Cheng, 2011). This study being centred around lived experiences of men, it is therefore fitting that one focuses on the fourth source of queer theology to queering masculinity, the lived experiences and realities of masculinity. Queer has been used as an umbrella term that collectively refers to lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, queer, intersex and other individuals who identify with non-confirming genders and sexualities (Cheng, 2011;3). In this context, I am arguing that instead of constructing masculinities within a heteronormative framework that does not give men autonomy and agency and space to envision an alternative masculinity, we must then queer masculinities.

Queering redemptive masculinities within the Pentecostal context create space where men can explore alternative ways of being a man while also giving them language in which they express their lived masculine experiences. Gabaitse (2020) argues that though Pentecostal masculinity is believed to be an alternative to toxic hegemonic masculinity, they are still constructed within a system that does not give men liberty to embody this ideal.

Queering masculinities and redemptive masculinities within the Pentecostal context involves challenging and disrupting traditional understandings of sexuality and gender identity, particularly those rooted in the binary system that has historically defined gender and sexuality (Cheng, 2011; Heasley, 2005). While redemptive masculinity offers an alternative model for Christian men, it still operates within the binary framework and upholds heterosexuality, prescribing specific ways for straight men to perform their masculinity within heteropatriarchal norms (Chitando & Kilonzo, 2018; Gabaitse, 2020). By queering redemptive masculinities, we can explore how heterosexual men might disrupt the dominant discourse of hegemonic masculinity, which legitimizes their lived experiences (Heasley, 2005). The lived experience of being a born-again man is deeply personal and unique, yet the frameworks available often fail to provide adequate language to fully articulate these experiences.

Engaging in the queering of masculinity within Pentecostalism can open up new, life-affirming possibilities for men by freeing them from restrictive norms that equate manhood with dominance, emotional suppression, and rigid heterosexuality (Cheng, 2011; Heasley, 2005; Ratele, 2016). It allows men to embrace vulnerability, emotional expressiveness, and a plurality of identities that align with their spiritual and personal journeys. In doing so, queering masculinity can create a space where men are no longer bound to prove their worth through power and control, but rather through compassion, mutual respect, and inclusive forms of discipleship that affirm all identities and expressions of faith (Chitando & Kilonzo, 2018; Gabaitse, 2020). The contours of redemptive masculinity and Pentecostalism do offer an alternative.

## 5.6 Vulnerability

Positive forms of masculinity open an opportunity to consider the nurturance of loving masculinity and the educating of men to embrace their vulnerability in their emotional lives (Ratele, 2022:170). Ratele (2022) asserts that masculinity has often been constructed in avoidance of vulnerability, which is considered a feminine trait that men should not embrace. Hook (2004) further asserts that patriarchal masculinity insists that men must prove their manhood by idolising loneliness and disconnection. In her description of vulnerability as an emotional state of being that men seek to avoid, she connotes that patriarchy has oppressed men from expressing their emotions and their ability to connect with others on an emotional level (Hook, 2004:125). In this study, men's vulnerability was expressed in a variety of ways. In their exploration of masculinity as an embodied experience, Field-Springer and Striley (2018) use the concept of self/being to centre this masculine experience and argue that it becomes difficult to understand men when they are disconnected from the self.

In unpacking vulnerability as a masculine, the researcher acknowledge and notes the ambivalence experienced in engaging with the study participants, not only as a man who sometimes disassociate from the self to perform a social role but also as a faith leader who grapples with issues of vulnerability. Arguably, these feelings of vulnerability and not properly unpacking them is a result of how men have been socialised into loneliness (Hooks, 2004) and how masculinity theory disassociates itself from men who embody their femininity. Adinkrah (2012) further argues that societal norms concede with cultural traditions which prohibits men's public display of emotions because they are interpreted as weak. The perception of weakness puts men at between a rock and hard place of choosing whether the express their emotions or not. There is something about vulnerability that makes men feel uneasy about themselves. In the data collection process, especially individual interviews. Participants hesitated to go deeper into their personal issues that possibly emasculates them because of the emotions attached to those issues. The "*sizofa sibancene*" phrased used by Sbusiso<sup>34</sup>, drives the narrative in the scholarship of men and suicide that men would rather be dead then dishonoured (Adinkrah, 2012) by society for failing to live to masculine expectations. Hegemonic masculinity, with its occupation of power, dominance

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<sup>34</sup> Participants that offered an auto-photographic reflect

and superiority has prioritised man's honour above their well-being, no man wants to die emasculated and dishonoured. Langa (2020) longitudinal study on black masculinity construction in a South Africa township demonstrate the importance of building repour with study participants and to build trust overtime. The nature of this study did not allow for time and space for trust to be built, thus men could not be comfortable in sharing their most intimate vulnerabilities about their daily lived experiences.<sup>35</sup>

The study findings confirm Hooks' (2004) reflection on the oppression of men's emotions and feelings as a patriarchal construction of masculinity that prohibits such emotional reflection. She further asserts that the more patriarchal the man is, the more he is disconnected from his feelings. If he cannot feel, then he cannot connect or be intimate. The redemptive nature of Pentecostal teachings and the ideo-theological identity of being born-again have transformed these men from the patriarchal bondage and oppression of their emotions, and they are able to be vulnerable about their fears and what it means to be a man. This patriarchal discourse of masculinity regarding vulnerability can be deconstructed to construct new masculine identities. Malose Langa's longitudinal study with young adolescent boys and their process of becoming men in a South African town is indicative of men's ability to embrace their vulnerability outside of the patriarchal framework (Langa, 2020). Ratele (2022) further asserts that men understanding their masculinity is crucial to how they live and relate to others, and says that if men want to live openly, they must be vulnerable.

The discouragement of vulnerability among men is expressed by cultural sayings such as "men don't cry" as a way of policing how men should express their emotions. McQueen (2017) explores the tension caused cultural discourse on how to be manly and how to do emotions. Emotions in his case refers to how men talk about intimacy (McQueen, 2017). The discourse saying that "men don't cry" in men and masculinity has largely been explored in the context of psychotherapy. Reid's (2016) research exploring male clients' experience of being vulnerable in a psychotherapeutic setting found that participants felt that their vulnerability would lead to them being rejected. Men employed different ways of coping

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<sup>35</sup> My positionality in the study might have influenced participants willingness to be more vulnerable and opening about vulnerabilities. As a pastor and regional youth leader, my positionality carries power, and this power might have restrictive to participants being fully transparent about some of their personal experiences.

with their emotions, such as alcohol and avoiding intimacy, as being vulnerable conflicts with the hegemonic masculinity gender role script. The findings in this study show that the inability of men to express their emotions due to the cultural discourse of “men don’t cry” (Ratel et al., 2010; McQueen, 2016) often leads to mental health issues. The reality is that men do cry; however, the social discourses that inform the masculinity construction process deny men the opportunity to cry. Herron and colleagues (2020) in their study investigating masculinity and mental health, argue that men’s mental health requires greater attention. These sentiments were echoed in the results of this study. The auto-photography method used in this study provided a glimpse into how men navigate their vulnerability in their everyday life. It showed that by virtue of being a man, you cannot wear your heart on your sleeve and openly share your vulnerabilities without risking your masculine identity being questioned.

The notions “*sizofa sibancane*” and “*bafela ngaphakathi*” speak to the silencing in which men endure under the patriarchal system and have become expected of them not to speak openly about personal issues. The silencing is informed by the encouragement of men to be emotionally restrictive as conceptualized by masculine norms that are rooted in social and cultural expectations (Ezeugwu and Ojedokun, 2020). This emotional restrictiveness has psychological or mental health implication as men do not have any other avenue that is socially accepted in which they can seek help. The silencing further conceals the unstable notions of the hegemonic masculine ideal and the patriarchal expectation that has been placed on men, these expectations are unattainable. These notions of emotional restrictiveness highlight the need to deconstruct masculine notions of toughness and allow men to be fully human and challenge patriarchal notions that vulnerability equals femininity and weakness.

As argued in the above section, central to the construction of masculinity is the male body, which is also vulnerable. As a carrier of social roles and expectations of societal norms of performing gender, and a tool in which individuals encounter gender (Wines, 2023), it becomes susceptible to all kinds of rejection, othering, policing and imposed masculine expectations. As highlighted by Graybill (2016) in her engagement with masculinity in the Hebrew Bible, the body of prophets being both feminised yet also masculine further complicates how Pentecostals view themselves and their bodies in relation to biblical

masculinity. Their bodies must not only reject the hegemonic norms of doing gender; they must also embody an alternative masculinity in which they are othered within this context (Hearn, 2012; Lindhardt, 2015; Wines, 2023). Connell's (1995:54) concept of body inescapable asserts that the construction of masculinity through bodily performance means that gender is vulnerable when the performance cannot be sustained. The findings of this study confirm Connell's statement, showing that the questioning and policing of Pentecostal men's gender puts them in a vulnerable position where they constantly have to negotiate their gender and contend with the hegemony. The following theme discusses men's engagement with media and how it has influenced and affected their masculinity construction process.

The vulnerability theme in this study offers to consider both power and performance within men and masculinity studies. Power has largely been perceived as an anchor for successful embodiment of masculinity. Informed by patriarchy and religio-cultural discourse, power places men in a superior and dominant position (Kirby & Van Klinken, 2022) where they exert control and dominance over women, children and other men who occupy a subordinate position in society. Power is attained and maintained through meeting the social expectation of manhood which includes being a provider, protector, head, and leader. The loss of power as highlighted by scholars (Gibbs et al., 2014; Andoh-Arthur et al., 2018; Ampofo & Ampofo, 2021) puts men in a vulnerable position of being emasculated and invalidated, and at the risk of committing suicide because they have failed as men. Andoh-Arthur et al. (2018) refer to this process as the breach of patriarchal norms where power is transferred to a lesser gender, i.e. women, by virtue of men not living up to these expectations. The findings of the study show that men are vulnerable when it comes to trying to live up to the expectation of being a provider and not being able to do so according to the family needs at that time.

Performance of masculinity is also linked to the embodiment of power and the patriarchal expectations that are placed on men. These expectations not only put pressure on men; they are also oppressive towards them. A real man must meet these socially ascribed notions of masculinity and is policed to ensure that he enacts it according to these standards, leaving him no room for an alternative embodiment of masculinity. The breach of patriarchal norms renders a man unmanly and not worthy of the title of being a real man, emasculating his identity. Research on intimate partner violence shows that men often resort to violence as an

alternative to affirm their masculinity when they feel their masculinity is threatened (Jewkes, 2002; Gibbs et al., 2014; Sikweyiya et al., 2020).

### **5.7 Mediated masculinity**

According to Van der Watt (2016:1), the social construction of our reality is influenced extensively by mass media. Hoover and Coats (2015) also assert that media is an important source of the broader culture in which males make sense of who they are and construct ideas about their masculinity. The engagement with the media aspects in this study was to explore the extent to which media influenced the masculinity construction process among born-again men. Facebook, the social media networking site, was a common media site that participants largely engaged with. Salam (2021) refers to Facebook as a social media platform that acts as a medium of communication and has enabled its users to engage with and reinforce ideals about gender and gender ideology. In his study exploring masculinity displays in Facebook among Pakistani men, Salam (2021) found that men often posted photos of themselves that are framed within the traditional heteropatriarchal masculinity, where men would demonstrate the courageous risk-taking aspects of their masculinity. The findings of this study however suggest that men's engagement with media is solely for the purpose of networking and communicating with peers online.

Social media particularly Facebook emerged as the platform most frequently used, with results indicating that participants were more active on it for various reasons, including networking and forming friendships. Their interaction with Facebook showed a range of responses, with some participants mentioning that the platform does not always reflect a true image of who they are. Siiabak (2010) refers to this as self-representation, where individuals choose to present an idealised version of themselves. These idealised versions then become a contact point in which men refer to their masculine identities, choosing how they are to be perceived and negotiated their masculinity in this mediated space.

The results of this study showed that born-again men did not engage media to an extent that it influenced their process of masculinity construction. This contradicts studies (Hoover & Coats, 2011; Vokey et al., 2013) which argued that masculinity representation in popular culture influenced how men construct their masculine identity. Perhaps this finding may be

attributed to Hoover and Coats' (2015) reflection in their book *Does God Make the Man Media, Religion, and the Crisis of Masculinity*, that media has often been perceived as a threat to the religious identity of Evangelical protestant men. They assert that evangelical men believed that media threatens the normative ideals and the positive sense of identity of masculinity. It does so through sexual and violent representation of masculinity. The men in this study expressed that their masculine identity is not expressed in media, as it is filled with the negative connotation of what it means to be a man.

The findings indicate that though men used Facebook for networking and communication purposes, the representation of masculinity is sometimes skewed to fit into a certain narrative that presents men in a negative light. Granted, the hashtags used for online-activism, particularly against toxic masculine behaviour (Reneses & Bosch, 2021) are condemning men for such behaviour, but not all men are violent. The latter does not seem to be accepted not acknowledged in such climate because of the violence attached to masculinity.

Media types such as television, film and advertisement have in the past objectified women's bodies – their bodies were always packaged as visual erotica (Van der Watt, 2016:2). In their study investigating religion, media, and the crisis of masculinity among Evangelical Protestant men, Hoover and Coats (2015) found that there is a conflict in the sexual innuendo in media context that acts as a stumbling block to men's quest for constructing their masculine identity according to their faith traditions. The results of this study confirm this conflict, as some of the men expressed that media often presented as a site of sexual temptation. These findings confirm Thornton (2018) study on Pentecostal men and sexual temptation arguing that it becomes the main struggle the unmarried born-again men struggle with. He argues that the church's prohibition of sexual matters inspires a range of responses that indicate a lot of uncertainty in men. For example, the prohibition of fornication and the expression of desires of the flesh places men in a vulnerable position of resorting to masturbation to release their sexual frustration.

The Pentecostal faith traditions and doctrine prohibits premarital sex and prohibits born-again believers for acting against sexual desires. Thornton (2018) asserts that this specifically is difficult for men to embrace and is one of the challenging demands of faith that born-again men must confront. In his study of Pentecostal men of God and sexual temptation, the men

cited that sexual temptation was the main obstacle to their conversion and to adopting and maintaining a born-again lifestyle (Thorton, 2018). He further argues that displays of sexuality or any form of sexual relations outside of marriage is discouraged. It is for this reason that men in this study limited their engagement with social media because of the sexual exposure that clearly challenges their ability to maintain their religious identity. Contrary to other studies that explored masculinity construction in mediated space (Lewington et al., 2018; Reneses & Bosch, 2021), the result of this study did not show that these men negotiated or constructed their masculinity in the mediated space.

Pentecostal born-again men's engagement with media, specifically social media, is limited. This lack of engagement with media is attributed to the negative perception of media and the influence it has on Pentecostal born-again men's religious masculine identity (Hoover & Coats, 2015). The sexual overtone or innuendo has prevented born-again men from constructively engaging with media, because engaging with such images is prohibited by faith traditions. The limited engagement with media is also attributed to born-again men's lived realities and ideals of masculinity not being adequately represented in the media.

In my previous work (Ngcobo, 2021), I provided a critical overview of Pentecostal men's promotional media material and how these media representations reproduce masculinity, thus informing masculine performance among men. One church in particular used roman soldier imagery to advertise for *Mighty Man of Valour* conference, accompanied by a 55 second promotional video, encouraging men to rise to the call of God.<sup>36</sup> It uses the Gideon narrative found in Judges 6 where the angel of God speaks with Gideon, affirming him as mighty and fit for the task at hand. The findings of this study then make one question why Pentecostal media promotional material uses certain images to promote a particular agenda. In the case of *Mighty Men of Valour*, the promotional material promotes an agenda of strong, aggressive, and physically attractive men who will rise to the expectations of manhood, no matter the calamities they may encounter.

In another example, *Men on Track*, a religious men's movement, offers a different representation of masculinity.<sup>37</sup> It showcases a masculinity that embodies power through its

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.roaringtruthministries.co.za/index.php/mighty-men-of-valour>.

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/Men-on-Track-North-West-1486036831689463/>

depiction of men in power suits. Interestingly, none of the sampled promotional material had a man wearing traditional attire. The colonial presence in the African continent promoted a culture of civilisation among African people and those who converted to Christianity. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that men in this study did not have much to say about cultural influences in their masculinity construction process. Therefore, whether directly or indirectly, media representations do influence our masculinity construction process. In this context, its message is one of embodying strength:

### **5.8 Saying a lot without saying anything**

The social construction of masculinity has largely been theorised using the hegemonic masculinity concept that has dominated men and masculinity scholarship (Connell, 2005; Jewkes & Morrel, 2018). This concept has been used to understand men's need for power, control and dominance and has also influenced how men construct their masculine identities. In conjunction to hegemonic masculinity, Borgogna and McDermott (2022) assert that men construct their identity through the traditional masculine ideology, which proposes that men perform and maintain a gender identity that is reflective of socially acceptable norms of masculinity.

To contextually understand how men make meaning of and construct their masculine identity, we have to look beyond the social norms that inform this gender identity to the lived experiences of how men construct their identities individually. In a post-colonial context such as South Africa, we must look at socio-political, socio-structural and socio-economic factors that influence the masculinity process (Morell & Swart, 2005; Ratele, 2014; Langa, 2020). This process is also complex in that it is also influenced by social structures such as media, religion and culture. The study data shows that the men in this study had a fair amount to say, but said nothing about the complexities, conflict and difficulties of negotiating and constructing their masculine identities as born-again men.

The social realities that scholars of black masculinities highlight in their scholarship (Ratele, 2013, 2014; Langa, 2020) were glazed over by religious traditions and notions of masculinity that men in this study only referred to difficulties in the performance of masculinities against what society expects of them. For example, men in this study defined being a man as being

a provider, protector, leader, and head of the family. Hoover and Coats (2015) call this elementary masculinity in which Christian evangelical men draw on religious resources to define their masculinity. It seems as if Pentecostal men's ideo-theological identity as born-again has totally wiped out the life they led before they ascribed to this doctrine. However, Lihle's statement, "Before I am born-again, I am a man" connotes that there is a man and a religious identity, it has just been suppressed by faith traditions that born-again men must live up to. These elementary notions of masculinity essentially inform Pentecostal and biblical masculinities (Van Klinken, 2012; Thorton, 2018).

Thorton (2018) asserts that the Pentecostal church asks men to do gender differently from their traditional hegemonic norms of masculinity. Lindhardt (2015) also asserts that Pentecostal men are required to lead a private life that is family orientated, committed to nuclear ideals of family, and denounce hegemonic notions of masculinity that are contradictory to their faith traditions. Being a born-again man means that after conversion, you abandon traditional masculinity and adapt a masculinity that is rooted in moral values (Thorton, 2013). This Pentecostal masculinity does not ascribe to the traditional masculine role, as these men do not construct their masculine identity according to the dominant constructions of masculinity (Borgogna & McDermott, 2022). Evidently, the men in this study have abandoned their "street" or hegemonic notions of masculinity, adapting to a more private Pentecostal masculinity, which could account for the lack of interest in reminiscing about their past masculine identities.

The study's participants did not extensively engage in issues of gender and sexuality and how their religious identities have influenced how they engage with these concepts. As highlighted by Thornton (2018), men in this study did not explicitly refer to sexual temptation when talking about temptation they encounter in their engagement with media, because this is something that they have been conditioned not to entertain as this goes against their faith tradition and beliefs. He argues that Pentecostal men have the urge to be sexually active yet they suppressed their hypersexual behaviour for religious purpose (Thorton, 2018). Furthermore, they did not engage extensively on the sexual tones of images they encounter in their engagement with social media. One participant, however, insinuated that watching sexually explicit material added "flavour" to his marriage. Yet because of the shame that is

associated with watching sexually explicit material, it is often spoken about as lustful sin in the Pentecostal context.

The lack of discussion about sex and sexual overtones in media may be because Pentecostalism does not encourage such conversations to take place (Thorton, 2018). Non-married born-again men have no business discussing sex and their desires, as this would contradict the kind of men they are aspiring to be under faith traditions. In their studies, Hoover and Coats (2015) also highlight evangelical men who believed that any sexual conversation or talk related to it should be among a married couple and done in the privacy of their bedroom. As also mentioned above, sexual temptation and desire are detrimental to the life of a born-again convert and are some the difficulties that born-again men often struggle with (Thorton, 2018). However, in this study, sexual temptation and desire were only referred to when participants spoke about the negative side of media engagement, not when they spoke about how they navigated this aspect of their masculinity. Again, this may be because they are born-again Christian men who are expected to live a holy life, free of any sexual immorality.

Pentecostal masculinity is constructed through heteronormativity. The fear of born-again men being perceived as gay because of their chosen lifestyle. Homosexuality, specifically homosexual men, are considered a violation of the envisioned ideal of Christian masculinity (Owino, 2020:341). Owino makes this statement based on his engagement with the Pentecostal-Charismatic men's movement that demonstrated that ideas of Christian or biblical masculinity are constructed within the discourse of male sexuality and ideal of conversion. The results of the study confirm that being homosexual is not acceptable within the Pentecostal traditions; the thought of being perceived as gay makes these men uncomfortable and vulnerable.

The absence of talking about issues of masculinity in general is evident in the study findings. When Hoover and Coats (2015) spoke about the violence perpetuated by men being portrayed on screen, the evangelical men in their study felt that this was a false representation of masculinity, thus there was a negative perception of media regarding issues of masculinity. In this study, the result does not show any concern for or any acknowledgement of gender-based violence within the Christian faith landscape, specifically within the Pentecostal

traditions.<sup>38</sup> The only time the issue of violence was mentioned was in the context of defining masculinity.

These findings connote that born-again men construct their masculinity and masculine experiences outside of the country's social issues and ills such as gender-based violence and the high HIV numbers, perpetuated by dangerous and toxic masculine behaviour (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012). The study findings cover and justify the patriarchal notions of masculinity in which men are expected to be superior and dominate women and children and other men. They paint a picture of men who do not really want to engage with the heteronormative masculine behaviour, and how their embodiment of masculinity as born-again men doesn't really liberate women but rather oppresses them through their employment of discursive power in their everyday religious language.

The findings also show that born-again men are oblivious to religio-cultural influences in their masculinity construction and none of them question or challenge these expectations that they must live up to. Perhaps the "white" man's religion has usefully wiped out the indigenous knowledge systems that were embedded in social interaction and has forced born-again men to completely block out their traditional/cultural expectation of manhood. Mfecane's (2020) article of decolonising masculinity studies within the African context is indicative of the need to remind men that their identity is shaped and informed through indigenous knowledge systems of being, and that one cannot exist outside of communal engagement. Pentecostal traditions and beliefs assert that being a born-again man is an individualistic decision. Its doctrines and the embodiment of this individual identity fail to consider that men within this context do not exist outside of community. These findings are indicative of the individual identity which born-again men have adopted, and how they have

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<sup>38</sup> The issues of gender-based violence within the Christian faith landscape and how religion plays a role in the perpetuation of violence against women through its patriarchal teaching of male headship and leadership and theology of submission have been well documented. *Elisabet le Roux, Neil Kramm, Nigel Scott, Maggie Sandilands, Lize Loots, Jill Olivier, Diana Arango & Veena O'Sullivan (2016) Getting dirty: Working with Faith Leaders to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence, The Review of Faith & International Affairs, 14:3, 22-35, DOI: 10.1080/15570274.2016.1215837* perfectly sums up the work that has been done to address issues of gender-based violence in the church.

forsaken anything to do with traditional and cultural practices, essentially excluding them from male bonding.

The dominant discourse of masculinity, where men are expected to be providers, protectors, leaders, penetrators, heads of families, and heterosexual suggests that men cannot detach themselves from patriarchy without also denouncing their male gendered identity (Morrell, 1998). Masculine identity is deeply rooted in patriarchy and cannot be fully understood outside of it. Chitand0 (2007) further arguing that men benefit from the privileges and social rewards that patriarchy offers, making it difficult for them to denounce patriarchy.. Innocent's reflections on patriarchy further affirm the idea that men's survival is tied to patriarchy, as it is perceived to be innate to their identity. The findings of this study reveal that although Pentecostal men strive to embrace a renewed and transformed masculinity, they remain entangled in the heteropatriarchal norms that shape this identity.

While it may seem that men cannot escape patriarchy, Baker and Bilirano (2018:5) advocate for queering masculinities through an interdisciplinary lens to better understand the complexities of contemporary masculinities and their limitations, especially within social, religious, and cultural settings. It is clear that the hegemonic masculinity framework used to understand masculinities (Connell, 2005) has, to some extent, fallen short in unpacking these complexities and addressing crucial issues. At the same time, African hegemonic masculinity (Ratele, 2014) tends to be homophobic towards non-conforming forms of masculinity. Similarly, Pentecostalism expects non-heterosexual or non-hegemonic masculinities to align themselves with its own version of masculinity. In this context, queering masculinities offers an alternative approach that embraces masculine diversity and becomes a foundation for recognising the multiple forms of male representation (Baker and Bilirano, 2018).

## **5.9 Conclusion**

The purpose of the chapter was to discuss and engage with the theme generated during the data analysis process using thematic analysis. The themes were discussed in relation to available literature and the theoretical frameworks used in the study as discussed in chapter three. Seven themes we discussed. Theme one, masculinity performance, discussed how men described and understood masculinity through elementary masculinity and gender roles that

were performed and constructed under the dominant patriarchal discourse of masculinity, such as man as provider, protector, leader, and head of the family. Provision is an important masculine signifier for men in this study, and the findings are similar to the study by Sikweyiya et al. (2021) on provision being a responsibility that mine workers cannot escape due to the cultural expectation that has been placed on men to be breadwinners. This brings into question issues of socio-economic status within a context of a high unemployment rate, threatening masculine identity.

The second theme, religious identity, and one sub-theme, new culture/lifestyle, were discussed in relation to the ideo-theological identity of being born-again. Pentecostalism is a branch of Christianity that is fast growing within the global south, specifically in Africa (Kaunda & John, 2020). Believers who ascribe to Pentecostalism and its doctrine of regeneration become born-again Christians. This implies a radical change in men's behaviour and how they construct and perceive their masculine identities. According to Gabaitse (2020), being born-again is a religious identity that requires an individual to separate from sin and to change their day-to-day patterns and behaviour. Born-again men undergo a radical masculine behavioural change, reconstructing their masculine identity according to their faith traditions and adopting a lifestyle and culture that speak to this new life. Lindhardt (2015) asserts that after conversion, men are socialised to a private lifestyle that is domestic and family orientated, and they commit to being a responsible family man. This is an embodiment of a new lifestyle that is symbolic of the new identity that men have adopted. Theme three is the collapse of culture and religion. The relationship between religion and culture is always interesting, especially concerning expectation issues of gender and masculinity. Culture expects men to embody the patriarchal hegemonic masculinity ideal while Pentecostalism expects men to embody a transformed masculine identity that does not conform to hegemonic norms of masculinity. In this study, the collapse between these two social structures has been demonstrated through born-again men's negotiation and navigation of masculinity between religio-cultural expectations. Furthermore, it has proven the conflict and the disconnect that born-again men experience in their relationship with culture.

The fourth theme, sexuality and embodiment, discussed the male sexuality as a masculine performance where hegemonic masculinity performance has been identified as key in affirming masculine identity as a man (Shefer et al., 2015). Sexual encounters with a female are an important rite of passage for transitioning from boyhood to manhood (Palmer, 2016). Born-again men's sexuality has often been questioned due to their lack of sexual encounters, and they have been perceived as gay. The men in the study felt the pressure to conform by embodying hegemonic male masculinity and heterosexual identity to affirm their masculinity. The fifth theme to be discussed was vulnerability. Defined as a state of being emotional (Hooks, 2004), and a state that men should avoid as it is not so manly for a man to show emotions. Patriarchal expectations and constructions of masculinity have oppressed men in expressing their emotions. Ratele (2022) asserts that masculinity has been constructed in avoidance of vulnerability as is it considered feminine behaviour. The men in the study expressed their vulnerability through reflection diaries, and reflecting on their everyday life and how they make sense of their masculinity within contemporary society. Theme six, mediated masculinity, explored media influence in the process of masculinity construction among born-again men. The finding of this study showed that men have limited media engagement, and it did not necessarily influence how they construct their masculine identity. Rather, media – especially social media – was perceived negatively because it did not represent the lived realities of born-again men and was cited as a site of sexual temptation.

## 6 CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

*“Understanding the nature of our vulnerability as men implies accepting that as children, we could not be but at the mercy of our parents but also as long as we desire to live openly, we are vulnerable.”* (Ratele, 2022:171)

### 6.1 Introduction

The discussion chapter discussed the themes that were generated using thematic and content analysis as an analytic tool. Using this tool, six themes were generated and discussed using existing literature and theoretical underpinning used for this study. The last theme: Saying a lot yet saying nothing, was particularly important because while much was said during the data collection, very little was said about the issues of men and masculinity within the South African context. This was a major concern, because it seems that the men’s religious identity makes them oblivious about issues surrounding masculinity and violence, liberating masculinities, and the representation and reproduction of masculinity in mediated spaces.

This chapter provides a summary of the research process that was undertaken to complete the research project. It provides concluding remarks and reflections on my own positionality for undertaking this study of men and masculinity within the Christian faith landscape, particularly Pentecostalism and its intersection with media. In this chapter, I also highlight the complexity of masculinity construction in a post-colonial context, make recommendations about future research for scholars interested in exploring the field of men and masculinities within the African context. I will start by outlining the research process that was used to undertake this study, then discuss the approach and process used in the study, and finally offer the general conclusion and recommendations.

### 6.2 Research process

The research process of this study was guided by the key research question:

***How do born-again men navigate the media, religion and culture in the process of masculinity construction in the Pentecostal faith tradition?***

To provide a nuanced understanding of Pentecostal men's masculinity construction process, the study used four sub-research questions:

- What are the ideo-theological notions and dominant construction of born-again masculinity within the Pentecostal faith traditions?
- How does media influence their masculine construction process?
- How does religion and culture influence their masculine construction process?
- How do contemporary born-again men navigate the negotiation and construction of their masculinity in their everyday life?

These questions were informed by the following research aims and objectives.

- To explore the ideo-theological contours and dominant constructions of born-again masculinity within the Pentecostal faith tradition.
- To understand how media influences the masculinity construction process.
- To understand how religion and culture influence the masculinity construction process.
- To explore how contemporary born-again men navigate the negotiation and construction of masculinity in their everyday life.

### **6.3 Approach and process of the study**

This study is framed within three theoretical underpinnings which informed the methodology used for this study to answer the research questions. African Masculinity Theory was used for this study because of its context. Being situated in a post-colonial context/global south, a context-informed theory such as African masculinity theory draws on men's lived experiences and realities, and their process of masculinity construction, which is influenced by a variety of factors such as socio-political, economical and structural factors. It was used to understand what it means to be a man in South Africa and how born-again men navigate and negotiate their masculinities in their everyday lives. The redemptive nature of Pentecostalism and the embodied radical lifestyle change that comes with being a born-again Christian, redemptive masculinity theory, was used to engage with the religious aspects of masculinity construction and to better understand how the religious traditions of Pentecostalism influence how men construct their new identities. It opened the conversation

of religio-cultural norms, how they influence gender identity, the disconnect between the embodied experiences, and the expectation of masculinity among born-again men. To engage with the media aspects of this study, media theory was used to explore the influence of the media on the process of masculinity construction.

Participatory research methodology was chosen for this project and was informed by the theoretical underpinning of this study. This methodology allowed the participants and me to partner in the knowledge production process of understanding the embodied and lived experiences of a born-again man, the new lifestyle that comes with this new identity, and the social implications that come with embodying this ideo-theological identity. This was done using three data collection tools: individual interviews, focus group discussions and auto-photography. The intensity of the data collection process required that I keep a reflection diary in which I could hold myself accountable and acknowledge the emotions that came with engaging the data, and to ensure the reliability and validity of the study during the data collection process.

Ten individual interviews were conducted for the study, giving the participants an opportunity to reflect on their embodied experiences of masculinity and what it means not only to be a man but also a born-again man. It also offered a glimpse into the embodied complexities of masculinity for a man navigating and negotiating their gendered identity. The nature of masculinity within the Christian faith landscape is closely linked to cultural notions of masculinity, but there is also a disconnect that exists between religion and culture. My observations during the data collection phase were that men are not comfortable talking about their experiences of masculinity and issues of manhood, especially those experiences before becoming born-again. This may be caused by a variety of reasons, including religious traditions of being a new creation and forsaking the past, or one could have simply been ashamed of their past life and experience of being a man. The pervasiveness of heteronormativity and patriarchy might be the reason that men feel there is nothing to discuss about what it means to be a man because of the normative script; being a man is a rule for a male-gendered person and there is no exception.

A total of fifteen participants took part in the focus group discussion. These discussions were aimed at exploring the dominant construction of masculinity and how these notions informed

born-again men's construction of their masculinity. It was also aimed at exploring masculinity representation in media and its influence on their identity construction. Unfortunately, not all participants engaged with the media material that was sent to them prior to the discussion, which made it difficult to get consensus regarding media engagement. Their understanding of masculinity is centred on the dominant heteropatriarchal notions of male leadership, headship, and the roles of protector and provider that they need to embody to successfully perform their masculinity. The focus groups also created a platform for exploring different meanings of being a born-again man. There was a consensus that women in heterosexual relationships occupy a submissive role. The invoking of scripture was used to justify this ideology and belief regarding women and their position.

The last data collection tools were diary entries or reflections using auto-photography in which participants shared their daily lived experiences of masculinity. It explored the embodiment of vulnerability, which is not openly shared by men due to the patriarchal notions that men must not embody or display any sort of feminine behaviour, essentially prohibiting men from being aware and acknowledging their emotions publicly. I appreciated the vulnerability and the courage that these men showed by sharing such intimate details about their lives. It also made me realise that patriarchy is oppressive towards men.

#### **6.4. Positionality**

Engaging in this research has profoundly challenged and reshaped my understanding of masculinity, particularly within the context of my continued service in an environment that systematically reinforces hegemonic masculinity. As both a faith leader and a born-again man, negotiating my positionality within the very structures that uphold patriarchal norms presents a complex and ongoing struggle. The landscape I inhabit demands constant self-awareness and reflection, as I seek to avoid perpetuating the very ideologies I aim to critique.

My positionality is especially nuanced due to the dual roles I occupy in both my professional/spiritual calling and personal life. Within my family, I am expected to embody the traditional roles of provider, protector, and leader, which are roles deeply embedded within patriarchal frameworks. Simultaneously, I strive to be an emotionally available husband and father. This tension often places me in a paradoxical space where vulnerability

is encouraged but only within socially acceptable limits, lest it be perceived as weakness. In my role as a faith leader, I occupy a position of authority and power that is often conflated with the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. This positioning creates an internal conflict as I endeavour to model an alternative masculinity that is rooted in humility, service, and emotional authenticity, while still navigating expectations tied to traditional gender norms.

Since beginning this research in 2020, my engagement with critical literature and participant narratives has forced me to confront my own internalized notions of masculinity. Frequently, I would find elements of myself reflected in the data, which facilitated deeper introspection and critical engagement with my own gendered formation. These moments of resonance have not only illuminated the pervasive influence of hegemonic masculinity in shaping male identities, including my own, but have also provided opportunities for personal transformation. The reflective journal that I kept during the research process hold most intimate parts of myself, vulnerability and a roller-coaster of feeling that came up during the process. Offering those reflections forced me to be honest what I can do and cannot do as a man. This reflection process is ongoing and highlights the importance of continuously interrogating one's positionality, particularly when operating within systems that sustain the very ideologies one seeks to dismantle.

### **6.5. Theoretical underpinnings**

Being positioned in a post-colonial context/global south, it was important for this study to be framed in African informed theory and nuances so that I could better understand the lived experiences of being a man in Africa (Mfecane, 2018; Ratele, 2021). African masculinity theory was helpful in this study for unpacking the dominant construction of masculinity and the expectations of masculinity that men needed to live up to. It also provided a layer for understanding men as gendered beings, as difficult as this might have been, considering the pervasiveness of gender essentialist ideologies that make men the rule, not the exception. This dominant construction of masculinity such as men being the provider, protector, leader, and head of the family, informed how men constructed their masculine identities and how they performed these roles without questioning them or going against them. The study findings and data show that men construct their masculinity against these norms, and performing these roles successfully validates one's masculine identity.

Understanding the lived realities of African men and their process of masculinity construction cannot be done without the consideration of the socio-economic status and historical factors that inform their identity (Morell and Stewart, 2005; Ratele, 2014). African masculinity theory helped to unpack the complexities of being a provider in an unstable economic climate where there is a high rate of unemployment, thus affecting and threatening a man's ability to live up to this expectation. This further complicates the masculinity construction process, as studies have shown that a man who cannot provide is a failed man and cannot be considered a man (Connell, 2005; Gibbs et al., 2014; Ampofo & Ampofo, 2021). The socio-economic aspects of masculinity in this study became a point of vulnerability for men, especially those who are father and bear the sole provider roles for their families. How do men then make sense of themselves and their masculine identity? In a context where there is a constant battle for hegemony and power, Kiguwa and Langa (2013) highlight the rise of a new masculine identity: protest masculinity, which is constructed as a hyper-masculinity that is found in reaction to social positioning of power and the constant struggle for better economic positioning. These dominant constructions also inform how religious men construct their masculinity, in this case, born-again Pentecostal men.

African redemptive masculinity theory was useful in unpacking how a "redeemed" born-again man constructed their masculine identity. During this process of unpacking, the concept of positive masculinity along with Pentecostalism and its teachings seem to be moving in the right direction in informing redemptive masculine identity. (Chitando & Kilonzo, 2018). However, it showed that although these men are born-again, they are not an exception to the patriarchal notions of manhood and masculinity. They must still conform to some of the traditional masculine ideologies of being a man. For example, tradition informed by patriarchy asserts that a man is the leader and head of the household. Pentecostal religious traditions expect the same from men. Being the leader and head of the family comes with a certain responsibility that intersects with being a provider. In their engagement with biblical/godly masculinity, Owino (2012) and Van Klinken (2013) assert that responsibility is a defining characteristic of being a godly man. As the head of the family, a man must provide not only physical, but also financial security for the family in order for him to enjoy the patriarchal dividends that come with this role (Owino, 2013; Van Klinken, 2013; Ampofo & Ampofo, 2021). The theory weaved out the disconnect between culture and religion and

how born-again men often had to negotiate and navigate this space in their everyday life. It also weaved out an interesting intersection of religion and culture, and the collapse of the relationship between religion and culture because it often clashed with the lived realities of men. Harris (2012, 2015) suggests that this collapse can be attributed to colonialism and the introduction of Christianity in Africa while dismantling tradition religion and indigenous knowledge systems that informed the way of being. Pentecostalism as a branch of Christianity focuses more on the spiritual aspect of the individual and urges their converts to denounce African traditions, because African religious practices such as connecting with ancestral spirits are considered demonic and evil by Christianity (Bawa, 2019). As detailed in the data presentation chapter, this was a point of contention for the participants, and where the relationship between religion and culture collapsed for them as they failed to reconcile their daily experiences with the religio-cultural notions of manhood. Redemption masculinity, being a resource for religious communities to foster and construct positive masculinities (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012), fails to consider the colonial effect within the Christian faith landscape, and how missionaries essentially alienated people from their traditional practices that gave them a sense of belonging and community. Christianity, being considered a white man's religion, therefore fails to acknowledge the lived experience of black men and their indigenous knowledge system.

In this process of redeeming men, Pentecostalism provides tool, through its theology in which this ideology or concept to materialize. The work of West (2013) using the Tamar Bible Study, uses the Contextual Bible Study framework to engage the toxic masculine behaviour that informs violence against women, but also provides us with alternatives to redeeming masculinity through the "See, Judge, Act" methodology. In a study analysing women's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS in Indonesia, Zengenene (2021) suggests that redemptive masculinity as a concept that can help eliminate the rising infection rate. In the process of reeling men from toxic masculine behaviour, Jodamus (2017) cautions that we must be careful in our search regarding the concept of redemptive masculinities, and that our attempts must be tempered with a nuanced and careful use of biblical interpretive take so that we do not re-inscribe hegemonic masculinity through what Nada (2009) calls palatable patriarchy. In essence, Jodamus (2017) is saying that we must be careful in our interpretation of the Bible, especially when it comes to theologies of male headship. Though a theology

that innocently reminds men of their God-given role and responsibility, it can also be harmful if scripture is interpreted inappropriately or out of context when addressing such issues. It has been argued that the project of redeeming men back to God has been met with challenges. The Mighty Men Conference is one example where the misappropriation of scripture and the lack of contextual understanding has further re-inscribed misogynistic ideology and patriarchy, all in the name of redeeming men.

The media frame that was used to explore the media aspects of the study proved to be difficult. Previous studies as mentioned above have highlighted the role of media in influencing the process of masculinity construction among Christian men. For this study, however, it was different. Surprisingly, the men in this study's interaction with media is too limited for it to influence their identity construction, yet media discourses of gender are pervasive in contemporary society. It is ironic that Pentecostal men have little interaction with media, yet are not influenced by it, considering that the church uses media as a base for communication and connecting with their congregants. Hoover and Coats (2015) in their study with Protestant men and their engagement with media, found that Christian men did not necessarily relate to the mediated images of masculinity, as they perceived it to be too worldly.

These theories of masculinity have proven to be useful in theorizing Pentecostal men in the post-colonial context. However, these theories are one directional in that they do not offer alternative avenue in which masculinity can be envisioned. Redemptive masculinity as theoretical framework redefines traditional notions of masculinity within the confines of religion. However, masculinities cannot be redeemed within the current framework unless we challenge the framework to be inclusive and supportive of alternative expressions of masculinity outside of the cis-heteronormative. There is a need to explore the contours of queer theology that is centred on four sources: scripture, tradition, reason and experience (Cheng, 2011). The creation of this queer space within the narratives of straight men and their lived masculine experiences, we are breaking and challenging the systematic while expanding the ways in which we frame masculinities. Queering masculinities is not about gender bending but it is about disrupting heteronormativity and homophobia (Heasley 2005).

## **6.6. General conclusion**

This study set out to explore how Pentecostal born-again men negotiate, navigate, and construct their masculine identity in the intersection of media, religion and culture. In attempting to answer the research question, this study used qualitative research design to understand the lived experiences of men and how they make meaning of who they are. The four sub-research questions informed the structure of the data collection process of using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and auto-photography. The data generated using these three data collection tools was then analysed using thematic content analysis, which yielded the themes that were discussed in the previous chapter. This general conclusion is based on the findings of the study and the outcomes of the research process.

### **6.6.1. Dominant discourses of masculinity**

The findings of this study showed that born-again Christian men constructed their masculine identities under the dominant heteropatriarchal discourses of masculinity, such as the man being the provider, protector, leader and head of the family, and the theological understanding that a man is God's ordained leader. Such discourses also inform and perpetuate gender ideology of male superiority and subordination of women. Men need to perform these masculine expectations or role to affirm their masculine identity. The discourse of provision was one of the dominant discourses that was discussed during the semi-structured individual interviews. There are layers to provision – financial provision is central to affirming one's masculine identity. However, the value of that financial support must also be enough to cover the needs of the family. This is affirmed by the findings of Sikweyiya et al. (2022), where men argued that as burdensome as provision is, it is an important aspect of masculinity, and men must be responsible enough to fulfil their duty as provider. Failing to embody this masculine trait, one is often emasculated and shamed within the community. The participants in this study also shared that their inability to provide makes them feel less of a man. This socio-economic status as argued by Ratele (2014) must be taken into consideration when theorising men in the South African context, which has an unemployment rate of about 31.9%.<sup>39</sup> Such conditions make it difficult for men to perform

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/statistics-south-africa-quarterly-labour-force-survey-quarter-three-2023-14>. Accessed 13 February 2024

and live up to this expectation and it makes one wonder if a man is still considered a man if he cannot provide.

Leadership and headship discourse also dominated the focus group discussion, and it was evident that Pentecostal faith traditions expect men to live up to these expectations. The men, masculinity and religion scholarship within the African context shows that these discourses are entrenched in Christian men and are further perpetuated by the Pauline teachings about male leadership found in Ephesians 5:22-23. The valuing of this scripture in entrenching the patriarchal gender ideology of male headship and leadership is used to ensure that the gendered relations between men and women are never blurred. The use of discursive and oppositional power not only shuts down the conversation about gender equality, but also affirms male superiority. Nadar (2009) argues that we should fear such notions, as it is patriarchy at its best, and it propped up in religious languages and traditions to ensure that econo-heteropatriarchy persists and that men cling to these notions so that they share the dividends that come with it. Her reflection is informed by the impact that the Mighty Men Conference has had in the Pentecostal and Evangelical movements, which call back to God's original plan where they are heads and leaders of their families and communities.<sup>40</sup> Owino (2012) also argues that this conference produces and reinforces godly/biblical masculinity which all Christian men should embody. Such theological and religious language, regarding men's role in society and family, reinforced the Pauline teaching of masculinity (Togarasei, 2012). Being framed and packaged in a God complex, this ideology cannot be questioned. The patriarchal gender ideology within the Christian faith landscape compromises the work done by the Circle of African Women Theologians of transforming masculinity and liberated masculinity (Dube, 2016). We are therefore forced to critically engage scripture from a contextual theological perspective that speaks to the lived social realities.

As a Zulu man who is somewhat traditional in my approach, patriarchy is embedded in me and it is expected that in my learned mind, I do not transgress against patriarchal norms. Yet, I cannot seem to reconcile my transformed mind with patriarchal ideology in my everyday life. I cannot escape patriarchy; it informs my daily interaction with my wife, my son, and my ministry. I must be the head, provider, protector, and leader of my household, and if it is

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<sup>40</sup> The conference was founded by religious leader Angus Buchan [www.angusbuchan.ac.za/event](http://www.angusbuchan.ac.za/event)

perceived that I lack in any of these, my wife calls me out on it. I strive to ensure gender equality in my house yet there are also domestic chores that I refuse to do. Not that I am incapable of doing them, but it is not my duty to do them. It is the patriarchal privilege that comes with being a man. It also becomes difficult to publicly condemn patriarchy at the risk of losing my social standing within my community, but I would also be perceived as a weakling. The patriarchal hegemonic masculinity is burdensome. Burdensome in a manner that one must constantly live up to these patriarchal expectations of being a leader, head of the family, protector, and provider, and one is constantly clouded with fear of not living up to these patriarchal expectations. We therefore need to critically reflect on the burden of masculinity that is imposed on men by patriarchy to fully understand the embodied meaning of masculinity. To illustrate this burden of masculinity the below image was shared and discussed in a lecture on issues of gender and masculinity. The patriarchal burden is oppressive to men.



*Figure 8: Social media comment regarding the male provider role.*

Born-again or Christian men cannot escape the realities of patriarchy that inform religious-cultural norms which influence their masculine construction process. They cannot construct their identity outside of the heteropatriarchal systematic framework. Patriarchy then becomes a gatekeeper in the exploration and embodiment of alternative ideals of masculinity that do not conform to this system. Because of the privileges that patriarchy provides men, specifically Nguni men, they will not give up their privilege for the sake of gender justice or equality.

#### **6.6.1.1. Ideo-theological identity**

Born-again religious identity is informed by the Pentecostal doctrine of regeneration. For men in this study, it means that they are required to denounce toxic masculine behaviour and notions that are informed by the patriarchal hegemonic norms of masculinity. It means that as men, they need to reconstruct their masculine identities according to their faith traditions and beliefs. A born-again man is a man who is redeemed, liberated, and transformed from the shackles of heteropatriarchy and who is to construct his identity according to his new life that is found in Christ Jesus. Though this ideo-theological identity of being born-again is based on redemption, it does not necessarily liberate men nor exempt them from heteropatriarchy. Furthermore, heteropatriarchy is at the core of Pentecostal masculinity, framed within the contours of hegemonic masculinity and propped up in religion through what Nadar (2009) calls palatable patriarchy. There is a growing acknowledgment of Pentecostalism within the field of gender and religion in seeking to transform masculinities in Africa and to promote the emergence of new, life-giving and positive masculinities (Chitando & Kilonzo, 2018; Gabaitse, 2020). However, these efforts will forever remain futile unless the heteropatriarchal systems are dismantled and men are provided with new avenues in which to construct their masculine identity outside of the patriarchal system and giving up their patriarchal privileges. Some say that colonisation in Africa is extinct, however, it still very much functions through the politics of identity construction and religious authority that enforce heteropatriarchy. We cannot escape it.

Pentecostalism, through its redemptive theology, brings about this transformation and offers an opportunity to construct life-giving and positive masculinity. The behavioural change informed by the redemptive nature of Pentecostalism and the embodiment of the religious identity transforms toxic masculine behaviour. Literature of Pentecostalism suggests that Pentecostalism is not much concerned with and about the body as a tool in which we encounter God and the world around us; it is more concerned with the spiritual side of things. Mofokeng and Modise (2019) assert that it emphasises the apostolic pneumatological experience that includes divine healing, prophesy and speaking in tongues. The spiritual is believed to inform behavioural change, thus regulating and policing the functioning of the body in relation to sin and holiness. For the longest time, the body has been treated with suspicion within the Christian faith landscape, as it has often been perceived to be a site of

sin, something moulded from clay, a container, or a temple of the Holy Spirit, rather than spiritual.

However, the patriarchal system within which this identity is framed is problematic. The premise in which this religious identity is constructed is the heteropatriarchal system, which maintains masculine power through oppositional, relational and discursive power. It has been argued by feminist theologians that discourse of male leadership, provision, protection and headship are centred on men maintaining dominance over women and children, both at home and within the community. Though born-again men are perceived not to embody toxic hegemonic behaviours, they are still expected to embody the heteropatriarchal norms of patriarchy, heterosexuality, male superiority and dominance over women, children, and other subordinate men. The econo-heteropatriarchal system makes us all susceptible to the normative notions of heteropatriarchy. The difficulty in grappling with this ideo-theological construction of masculinity is that there is no model of what this masculinity looks like (Ngcobo, 2021). This ideo-theological identity further promotes individualism as argued by scholars (Harris, 2015; Bawa, 2019), contending that the introduction of Christianity through missionary work during colonialism alienated indigenous people from their culture and traditional ways of living. Converting to Pentecostalism is an individual decision that one makes concerning their walk with Christ.

#### **6.6.2. Sexuality, gender and embodiment**

The body is central in the process of masculinity construction. It is a vehicle in which masculine performance is enacted. If we fail to acknowledge and understand the significance of the body in this process, we will misunderstand the way in which gender is constructed through performance (Hearn, 2012; Wines, 2023). The body of a born-again man is a contested space; its embodiment of masculinity is questioned because it does not conform to hegemonic standards. The sexual identity of a born-again man is also questioned – the lack of sexual prowess or activity implies the inability to penetrate. Penetration is an act of dominance that defines one's masculinity and their sexual virility (Steward, 2016). Sex outside of the institution of marriage is prohibited within the Pentecostal tradition, meaning that a man cannot engage in sexual intercourse if it is not with the person they are married to. The institution of marriage within the Christian faith landscape has been used as a

gatekeeping mechanism of “normative” notions of heteropatriarchy, limiting sexuality between a man and a woman.

*“When God created man and woman, sexuality was intended to be sacred for their perfect relationship which is so called marriage.”* (Joo, 2015: 3940).

The institution of marriage in the Christian church has been confined through binary terms between a man and a woman, as per the creation theology found in Genesis 1:27 *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”* This theology informs the construction and conceptions of gender and human sexuality, dictating heterosexuality as the norm and “perfect” in the eyes of God. Christianity then argues that non-heterosexual sexualities have threatened and distorted the image of sexuality and marriage and has also threatened the traditional/biblical family values (Bompani & Brown, 2015; Nel, 2019). Pentecostal traditions of holiness and purity also limit sexual encounters and sexual pleasure to within the institution of marriage.

It has been argued that human sexuality is a way of being human, and our way of relating to each other and what is other than ourselves (Togarasei, 2020:22). However, this experience of relating to each other sexually is confined within the institution of marriage, as it upholds God’s mandate of reproduction and multiplication. Pentecostalism, in its bid for normative script and as an agent of patriarchal gatekeeping, perpetuates the agenda of a traditional “normative” family that is defined within heterosexuality (Bompani & Brown, 2015). They argue that Pentecostal churches in Uganda have used media to promote heterosexuality and the institution of marriage as the only form of sexual embodiment that is to be normalised and practiced in contemporary society. This institution has not only upheld patriarchal gender order as well as maintain heterosexuality in society, but it has also become a source of grief and abuse for both women and subordinate men (Phiri, 2002; Dlamini, 2023). Therefore, the institution of marriage, a gatekeeper to and for human sexuality, has also shunned those who chose to experience each other sexually outside of marriage, and whose sexual identity does not fall within the normative script. The findings of this study show that unmarried born-again men’s sexuality is questioned when they take longer to commit to this institution of marriage. One participant went as far to say that sometimes they get married prematurely to counter this narrative of homosexuality.

*“Ukuthi ubudoda buya kumele ubumela. Ngenza yokubaleka ukubizwa ngestabeni, ugciba usushada prematurely kungakabi isikhathi ngenxa yokuthi... ipressure yokuthu kumele ube yindoda” (That I have to affirm my manhood. I’m trying to run away from being called gay, you end up getting married before your time...the pressure of being a man.) (Tshepho, Individual interview, 28 February 2023)*

Furthermore, this non-sexual embodiment of masculinity has created some form of homophobia for born-again men as they are not considered manly and are referred to as gay or homosexual. Homophobia not in a violent sense, but being othered for being born-again, unmasked, emasculated, and revealing to the world that they are not really a man, according to the social norms and standards (Kimmel, 1996).

As argued above, gender and sexuality are still understood in binary oppositions and essentialist views within the African Pentecostal landscape. Perhaps one of the major contributors to such views is the religio-cultural discourse of gender and sexuality that does not create space for a non-heteronormative sexuality to be embodied within this patriarchal context. The controlled narrative of heterosexuality in both political and religious spaces in Africa make little or no room for exploring other sexualities. The denial of the existence of queer masculinities as argued by Ratele (2011), signals that we can never explore the scholarship of African masculinity or masculinities in Africa, because the penile power is now distorted by an idea that it can be used on another man. Perhaps one of the greatest failures of Pentecostalism is their inability to reconcile heterosexual masculinity and queer masculinity in one space.

The politics of masculinity within the Pentecostal context also contribute to the subordination of queer masculinities. According to Owino (2020), a queer man can only become born-again if they are willing to reconcile their sexuality with heterosexuality that is promoted in this context. In his article “Love the Sinner, Hate the Sin: Homosexuality and Masculinity Politics Among Pentecostal-Charismatics – A Case of the Mighty Men’s Conference (MMC)”, he argues that Pentecostal traditions require that all men ascribe to heterosexuality. It connotes that “We love you as a man, but it is your homosexuality that we have a problem with”. It perpetuates the ideology that non-heteronormative sexualities are un-African and un-Christian, yet Tamale (2013) in her book *African Sexualities: a reader*, shows that

sexuality is fluid and confirms the existence of non-heterosexual bodies in the African context. Two of the leading Pentecostal churches, Assemblies of God and the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, pronounce that the family structure of a husband and wife, including children, should be confined to traditional ideals as dictated in Genesis 2:24: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”<sup>41-42</sup> Furthermore, they believe that non-heterosexual behaviour is sin because of its disobedience to scriptural teachings that are found in the book of Leviticus 18 and 20 and deem such sexualities as detestable. The perpetuation of the detestable narrative hinders those individuals who identify as non-heterosexual from becoming part of the Pentecostal community unless they reconcile their sexual identity to heterosexuality (Owino, 2020). Therefore, Pentecostalism, through its religious discourses and language, systematically discriminates and marginalises queer sexualities in their context. The pervasiveness of cis heteronormativity within the Pentecostal context confines gender and sexuality in the binary.

### **6.6.3. Media and masculinity**

The intersection of media and masculinity construction and its influence on born-again men was found to be limited. The findings of this study showed that born-again men’s engagement with media was on the bases of connection, interacting and networking. The men in this study found that media often portrayed a negative image of masculinity that they do not identify with. Narratives of men endangering the lives of women through gender-based violence, and the representation of absent fatherhood was found not be an accurate reflection of participants lived realities.

Men also found that media, specifically social media, had a lot of temptations, hence their limited engagement. Participants argued that their limited engagement with social media was due to the sexual overtones that were constantly displayed. These finding are particularly interesting because Pentecostalism uses media spaces to advertise their men’s conference promotional media material that portrays a certain type of masculinity that is required by the church. One can never really escape the presence of media, as it has become one of the social

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<sup>41</sup> <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/Homosexuality-Marriage-and-Sexual-Identity>. Accessed 10 March 2024

<sup>42</sup> <https://afim-ags.org/homosexuality/>. Accessed 10 March 2024

institutions that reproduces gender ideologies through its representation of femininity and masculinity. In navigating my own masculinity as a husband, son, father, and faith leader, I have been influenced by media in my own masculine construction. Hoover and Coats (2015) show that Christian men do engage with media and often contend with the portrayed images of fatherhood and masculinity represented in popular culture. Elsewhere, they also highlight that media does influence how men construct their masculine identity and how they position themselves against these ideals (Hoover & Coats, 2011). However, the men in this study found that presentation of masculinity in popular culture contradicted their ideals of masculinity and they therefore could not be easily influenced by media.

In my previous engagement with Pentecostal men's conference promotional media material and how it informs masculinity production against the backdrop of gender-based violence, I argue that masculinity is packaged and produced to embody power and dominance through the language and clothing used in these promotional images. The production of the promotional media material conforms to the hegemonic expressions of masculinity through the representation of the male body and cognitions of masculinity (Ngcobo, 2021:85). It then can be argued that Pentecostal media chooses certain engagements and use of media to portray a certain type of masculinity that Pentecostal men should aspire to live up to.

#### **6.6.4. Everyday navigation and negotiation**

Bell Hooks (2004) argues that most men rarely interrogate patriarchy, despite being born into and expected to embody its ideals. Though she makes a good argument about men not interrogating this systematic, men are oblivious to patriarchy because they benefit from it. These systematic expectations, however, are often unattainable and limiting. Through the use of auto-photography, this study reveals how men navigate and negotiate their masculinities within the tension between imposed patriarchal norms and their personal identities.

The embodied nature of masculinity emphasizes the male body as a site of gender performance and vulnerability. Patriarchal norms discourage emotional expression, equating vulnerability with femininity and thereby perpetuating disconnection from the self and

others. This cis-heteropatriarchal framing overlooks the potential for alternative masculinities that affirm emotional openness.

Reframing vulnerability as a strength, rather than a weakness not only challenges dominant masculine ideals but also offers a pathway in which we conceptualize masculinity from an embodied lived experience. The contours of queerness/ queer methodology provide a language and space through which men can resist patriarchal conditioning and embrace relational intimacy.

Hegemonic norms of masculinity and traditional masculine ideology maintain that men perform a specific type of gender identity that reflects the socially acceptable norms of masculinity (Connell, 2005; Borgogna & McDermott, 2022). Masculinity being an embodied experience, there are activities attached to this gendered identity and how it is performed (Ratele et al., 2010). The finding of this study shows that not all men express or embody their masculinity through dominant hegemonic forms such as hyper-masculinity and aggression. Navigating this landscape for a born-again man is never easy as they are constantly othered for their embodiment. The body being central to masculinity construction becomes the focal point in which society polices the “correct” embodiment. Connell (2005) uses the term “body inescapable” in explaining the physical embodiment of masculinity and argues that the construction of masculinity through bodily performance connotes that gender is vulnerable when masculine performance is not maintained. Sibusiso reflects on his inability to present a strong body, demonstrating that physicality puts him in a vulnerable position in which he must negotiate his masculinity against the hegemonic norms.

The findings show that men, though society dictates that a man does not cry as per dominant hegemonic construction (Connell, 2005; Morrel, 2001; Ratele et al., 2010), are in fact vulnerable beings, and they have not been given the opportunity to express this vulnerability because it has been conceived as feminine behaviour. *Sizofa Sibancane* (we will die young) is a phrase used by Sibusiso in his reflection on how society has dictated that they cannot be vulnerable about their emotions, leaving them with no option but to go through it alone. The notion that men do not cry has made it difficult for men to navigate everyday life as they are expected to just flow through life without expressing how they feel. Hooks (2004) asserts that patriarchy has disconnected men from feeling, therefore anything associated with

vulnerability insinuates a lack of control, with control and dominance being hegemonic masculinity traits. Ratele (2022) further asserts that it becomes difficult for men to express their feelings, becoming at war with themselves for having such feelings, because they have been conditioned to be strong men and to disassociate with any feminine behaviour.

Men are therefore expected to navigate their masculinity without being vulnerable (Hooks, 2004) as this will feminise them. Patriarchy has also dictated that there is only one way of being a man: through hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005; Morrell et al., 2012). Yet the study findings show that vulnerability allows men to explore different embodiments of masculinity and that perhaps rather than being viewed as a weakness, it can be used to explore new forms of masculinity. Pentecostalism, through its redemptive contours provides space for the exploration of soft masculinity which helps young men construct their identity and identity. This form of masculinity is often represented in social media networks where men are becoming and affirm their masculinity through the validation of others in the comments sections (Law, 2021). The representations also provide an alternative expression of masculinity outside of the normative standards such as aggression and physical dominance and deconstruct the whole “macho” discourse that has been associated with masculinity.

The findings also show that navigating everyday life and negotiating one’s masculinity against social norms informed by religion, culture, media, and gender ideology, is very complex and can only be understood through embodied lived experiences. These findings also inform us of the need to explore new methodologies in exploring men’s lives and their masculinity construction process and present an opportunity to question theoretical frames that have been used to study men in a post-colonial/global south context (Morrell & Swart, 2005; Connell, 2016; Mfecane, 2020; Ratele, 2021).

### **6.7. Recommendations for future studies**

This research project unpacked multiple complexities regarding masculinity construction among born-again men and what it means to be a man in this context. These complexities include the intersectional nature of masculine roles and expectations that men live up to. They cannot be studied separately. I would like to make the following recommendations:

- The explorations of the intersection of masculine roles such being a provider, protector, leader and head, and the practical embodiment of these roles in contemporary society. Further studies should also explore the individual implications of not living up to these norms and how they affect the mental health of Pentecostal men.
- Future studies need to also investigate the complex relationship between religion and culture within the Pentecostal context and how this relationship further complicates the construction of gender and sexual identities.
- Exploring queer methodology and theory as a political methodology to the interrogate cis-heteronormativity that inform masculinity construction.
- The exploration of queer masculinities and lived experiences of queer bodies in African Pentecostalism. Studies should explore how queer individuals navigate and reconcile their gender identity within Pentecostal theology and traditions, if ever they do reconcile.
- Vulnerability is key in understanding how men navigate and negotiate their masculine identities in contemporary society, especially Christian men. Studies should explore how vulnerability can be used to inform alternative masculinities within the African context and the notion of strength in vulnerability.
- Future studies must also explore the body of a born-again man as a contested space. Contested in a sense that it is regularly policed, sexualised and reprimanded when perceived to be acting different from the social norms.

## **6.8. Conclusion**

The study of men and masculinities within the African context is very complex. Masculinities in this context cannot be studied outside of power, performance, and politics. These three themes influence how we engage with this phenomenon as it intersects with religion, media and culture. Power in regulating gender relations between men and women and how these relations are influenced by heteropatriarchy within any given society. Religion, as argued by scholars (Nadar, 2009; Owino, 2012, 2020; Gabaitse, 2020; Mbabazi, 2020), plays a huge role in constructing gendered identities informed not only by religious discourse of gender and sexuality but also patriarchal norms. It has been argued that the root

of male superiority, dominance and power that men enjoy is influenced by the econo-heteropatriarchal system which functions to ensure that power is maintained by one gender. The theme of power in men and masculinity studies is also maintained by not breaching the patriarchal norms (Morrell et al., 2012; Kirby & Van Klinken, 2022). The performance aspects of masculinity are vital in maintaining power and living up to the expectations and roles. Of those roles, the breadwinner/provider role is central in affirming one's masculine identity and ensuring that a man is respected not only by his family but also the community at large. Considering the socio-economic context of South Africa, with its high unemployment rate, it is difficult for men to live up to this role and expectation as there are not enough opportunities to enable them to meet what is required of them. It has been argued in this study that men in Africa cannot be conceptualised or theorised without considering the economic implication of the process of masculine construction (Ratele, 2014). Furthermore, there are mental health implications attached to not being able to live up to this expectation, leaving both men and women in a vulnerable position. Men are being emasculated by their inability to provide and the shifting of power relations in intimate relationships when a female partner starts to earn more than them (Ampofo & Ampofo, 2021). It also places women in a vulnerable position of potentially experiencing violence from their partners, as research has shown that men use violence as an avenue to affirm their masculinity and to exert power and dominance over women (Jewkes et al., 2012). The politics of masculinity for this study relate to the correct way of embodying masculinity and the type of masculinity that is celebrated within the Pentecostal context. Informed by patriarchy, Pentecostalism prefers heterosexual masculinity over queer masculinity and often requires born-again men to reconcile their masculine identity according to the Pentecostal traditions (Owino, 2020). The intersection of these themes complicates the process of masculinity construction, and it is within this complexity where men lived experiences and realities inform how we theorise men in the African context.

Being a born-again man is an embodiment of Christ's character and of biblical or godly masculinity. The doctrine of rebirth or redemption requires radical behavioural change, and one must constantly be an example of Christ to others (Lindhardt, 2015). Issues of sexuality and embodiment complicate this process, as men cannot engage in sexual intercourse outside of the institution of marriage and heterosexism (Joo, 2015). The religious prohibition and the

requirement of purity of a born-again man have also feminised men, and their male sexual identity is constantly challenged. This brings a layer of sexuality that born-again men in this study never fully engaged with. It could be because of the essentialist understanding of sexuality between a man and a woman, or the Pentecostal beliefs and teachings that homosexuality is an abomination, thus never really addressing non-heteronormative sexualities in the church, or it could be because it is considered as a private issue that does not need to be spoken about in public or in sermons. Being born-again has proven to be complicated in terms of issues of culture and the upholding of cultural practices, as most of them are considered evil and demonic. Though born-again men are transformed through Pentecostal doctrine and teaching, they are still required to be patriarchal in the navigation of life and their performance of their masculinities. They have not and will not give up their patriarchal privileges of being men, and their new masculine identity is centred on the heteropatriarchal framework.

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## 7. ANNEXURES

### 7.1. Appendix A – Research Information Sheet

#### UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

#### Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Dear Participant

My name is Siwakhile Ngcobo from The University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, Pietermaritzburg campus.

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research engaging the masculinity construction and Negotiation of Pentecostal men in KwaZulu-Natal, Midland's region. The aim and purpose of this research is to:

1. To understand what it means to be a born-again man in African Pentecostal Church.
2. To Understand how media influences the manhood/masculinity construction process.
3. To understand how religion and culture influence the manhood/masculinity construction process.
4. To explore how modern born-again men navigate their negotiation and construction of masculinity in their everyday life.

The study is expected to enrol 16 participants in total. 8 participants in two focus groups (Pietermaritzburg and Bulwer), 10 individual interviews and 5 auto-photography reflections. The data collection process will happen in a period of one month in the Midlands region.

It will involve the following procedures:

- Individual interview
- Focus groups.
- Auto-Photography

These are the methods that are going to be used to collect data and all of them will be audio recorded, with the exception of the Auto-Photographic method, which involves reflections using WhatsApp Messenger.

The duration of your participation if you choose to enrol and remain in the study you expected to be to avail yourself for the scheduled group interviews and individual interviews as scheduled with the researcher.

The study will does not involve any risk or discomfort. However, we are aware that some of the things discussed may be uncomfortable and trigger certain memories or life events, provisions for psychosocial support will be made.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at ( [REDACTED], [REDACTED] ) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

### **HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time you wish to do so. Your withdrawal however may compromise the overall findings of the study as it also affects the sample size.

Kind Regards

Mr Siwakhile Ngcobo

PhD Candidate/ Researcher

**7.2. Appendix B – Consent Form**

**UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH  
ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)**

**CONSENT FORM**

I (Name) \_\_\_\_\_ have been informed about the study entitled *Being a Born-Again Man Engaging the Masculinity Construction and Negotiation of Pentecostal Men in KwaZulu-Natal Midlands Region* by Siwakhile Ngcobo  
I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

I have been informed that my identity will not be revealed or used in the study, but a participation number will be used.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at ( \_\_\_\_\_ ).

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview and focus group discussion      YES / NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

### 7.3. Appendix C – Interview Schedule

#### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE /GUIDE

##### Individual Interview Schedule

1. According to your understanding what does it mean to be a man?
2. How has your faith and culture influenced your manhood?
3. What does it mean to be born again for you?
4. As a born-again man, what makes you different from other men who are not born-again?
5. As a modern man who's exposed to all forms of media, how does that influence your how you view yourself as a man?
6. How is your idea of manhood represented in the media and your faith traditions?
7. In your everyday life, what is that one thing that has made you feel less of a man?
8. As a born-again man, how do you balance what tradition expects of you and what the church expects of you as a man?

##### Focus Group Interviews.

1. What does it mean to be a man?
2. What do these images say a born-again man should be?
3. How do these images reflect your ideals of manhood?
4. Looking at these images, does your masculinity/manhood match with the image of masculinity/manhood portrayed in the church? How are they different.
5. How would you define, born-again masculinity /manhood?

## 7.4. Appendix D – Ethical Clearance



03 October 2022

**Siwakhile Ngcobo (209504374)**  
School of Rel Phil & Classics  
Pietermaritzburg campus

Dear S Ngcobo,

**Protocol reference number:** HSSREC/00004808/2022

**Project title:** Being a Born-Again Man Engaging the Masculinity Construction and Negotiation of Pentecostal Men in Kwa-Zulu Natal Midlands Region.

**Degree:** PhD

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 22 September 2022 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

**Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.**

This approval is valid until 03 October 2023.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

### Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: [hssrec@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hssrec@ukzn.ac.za) Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

**INSPIRING GREATNESS**

## 7.5. Appendix E- Certificate of editing.

### Certificate of Editing

This serves to confirm that copy-editing and proofreading services were rendered to **Siwakhile Ngcobo** for *'Being a born-again man: Engaging the masculinity construction and negotiation of Pentecostal men in KwaZulu-Natal, Midlands region'*

as per the final edit on 16 June 2024.

*I commit to the following codes of practice:*

- *I have completed the work independently and did not sub-contract it out*
- *I kept to the agreed deadlines and/or communicated changes within reasonable time frames*
- *I treated all work as confidential and maintained objectivity in editing*
- *I did not accept work that could be considered unlawful, dishonest or contrary to public interest*

*I uphold the following editing standards:*

- *proofreading for mechanical errors such as spelling, punctuation, grammar*
- *copy-editing that includes commenting on, but not correcting, structure, organisation and logical flow of content, basic formatting (headings, page numbers), eliminating unnecessary repetition*
- *checking citation style is correct, punctuating as needed and flagging missing or incorrect references*
- *commenting on suspected plagiarism and missing sources*
- *returning the document with track changes for the author to accept*

**I confirm that I have met the above standards of editing and professional ethical practice.**

**The content of the work edited remains that of the student.**

**Note: I am not accountable for any changes made to this document by the author or any other party subsequent to my edit on 16 June 2024.**



**SIGNATURE**

Sarie Viljoen

**FULL NAME**